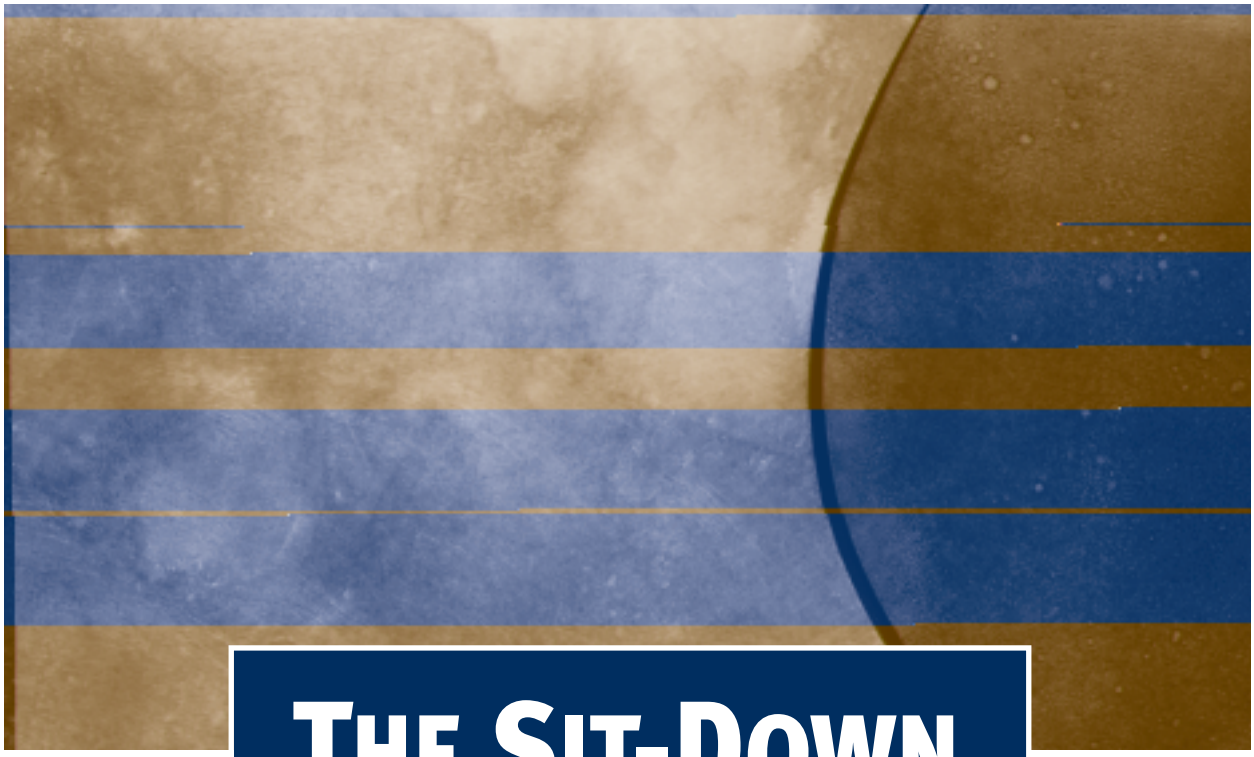

THE SIT-DOWN DINNER

FORMALIZING RESTRUCTURING UNDER THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT IN MICHIGAN

CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY
CEP

THE SIT-DOWN DINNER

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Michigan Department of Education (MDE) officials have been developing state-specific strategies for school restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) since 2003-04, when the state's first schools failed to meet state test-score targets for five consecutive years. Since that time, restructuring in Michigan has evolved from a smorgasbord of choices primarily controlled by districts and schools to a fixed menu of direct technical assistance from the state and the intermediate school districts, according to Betty Underwood, interim director of the state's Office of School Improvement. "Before it was like a buffet," she said of the restructuring options MDE offers districts and schools. "Now we've moved on to a sit-down dinner. You have to have your protein. You have to have your vegetables. And you have to eat your dinner before you have dessert."

Restructuring is the last consequence under NCLB for schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward their state's student achievement targets for five or more consecutive years. The law itself is a menu of choices requiring districts to pick one of five options for their schools in restructuring. These federal options associated with restructuring, from replacing school staff to contracting with an outside organization to run the school, are intended to reshape underperforming schools dramatically, but the choices themselves are broadly defined. Federal guidance emphasized the need for schools to make extreme changes in response to restructuring, but left states, districts, and schools to flesh out most of the details (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Michigan has used this flexibility to create its own approach to restructuring.

Which Michigan schools are impacted by restructuring? How does Michigan direct districts' and schools' choices about restructuring? How are these choices implemented? What is the initial impact of these choices? What lessons does Michigan have for other states still developing their restructuring policies?

To explore these questions, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) has followed restructuring in Michigan since 2004-05 and issued three previous reports on Michigan's restructuring efforts. For the current report, CEP reviewed restructuring documents, analyzed state test data, and interviewed decision makers at the state and regional level in the fall and winter of 2007-08. We also conducted case studies of restructuring through interviews and document reviews in four school districts—Detroit Public Schools, Flint Community Schools, Harrison Community Schools, and Willow Run Community Schools—and in nine schools within these districts. Several key points emerged from our analysis.

Key Findings

- ***More schools are in restructuring due to a greater number of high schools entering restructuring.*** Based on 2006-07 testing, the number of Title I schools[1] in restructuring in Michigan rose from 46 to 63. The increase is due to many more high schools entering restructuring and can in part be attributed to the introduction of a new high school state test in 2006-07, which resulted in decreases in the percentages of students scoring proficient or above. Without the surge of high schools entering restructuring, the number of elementary and middle schools remaining in restructuring based on 2006-07 testing would have been just 36.

- ***Michigan offers additional state assistance and monitoring.*** While Michigan still offers direct grants to schools in improvement, state officials reported shifting school improvement funding from the control of schools to the control of regional partners and taking an increasingly prescriptive role in assisting schools in restructuring. In 2007-08, the state has partnered with intermediate

[1] Title I schools are those that receive federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by NCLB; this program supports education for low-achieving children in low-income areas.

school districts (ISDs) and other regional entities to offer a set menu of restructuring assistance to all schools in restructuring. This assistance includes leadership coaches who spend 100 days working with principals in schools; Principals Fellowship that offers professional development to principals during the summer; and Process Mentor Teams made up of one state official, one ISD official, and one district official, which review the school improvement process and help the school set goals. Finally, a state team audits all schools in restructuring and provides data that these schools use to make decisions in collaboration with the Process Mentor Teams.

- ***Districts and schools appreciate assistance but wish it started earlier.*** District and school representatives we interviewed all said the increased assistance from state and regional agencies was welcome. They especially appreciated that the assistance was tailored to schools' needs and went beyond NCLB's simple requirement to choose one of four restructuring options. Several, however, said the Process Mentor Teams and leadership coaches were slow in starting, sometimes not beginning until the second semester of school. Many at the local level hoped that next year all assistance would be available at the beginning of the year.

- ***Turnaround specialists remain the most popular restructuring option.*** In 2005-06, the most frequently selected restructuring strategy in Michigan changed from the so-called "any other" option to the turnaround specialist (also called a coach), which 85% of schools chose. The popularity of the turnaround specialist or coach who oversees the restructuring, increased in 2006-07, when 87% of schools chose the option. State officials said that, although turnaround specialists are not required, they often recommended schools use this option.

- ***Participating schools view restructuring as a process.*** Although the school and district officials we interviewed all knew which official restructuring options their schools had chosen, none saw these as key to reform. Instead, most officials saw restructuring as a process that would unfold throughout the year. Compared to previous years, officials we interviewed more frequently said teams of educators would conduct ongoing meetings to set short-term goals and monitor progress. Teams included school improvement committees as well as Process Mentor Teams. As described in our 2007 report, officials planned to improve schools using additional strategies such as relying on data to make instructional decisions, increasing teacher collaboration, and sharing decision making at the school.

- ***Title I funds have increased but state financial difficulties have hindered restructuring.*** Title I, Part A funds in Michigan increased by about 10% in 2007-08. State, district, and school officials, however, agreed that this increase did not make up for the declines in enrollment and revenues in many districts. 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.

Study Methods and Background

For the past four years, the Center on Education Policy has conducted a series of analyses of the school restructuring process in selected states. Previously, we issued three reports on restructuring in Michigan (CEP, 2004; 2005; 2007b), three on restructuring in California (CEP, 2006a; 2007a; 2008), and two on restructuring in Maryland (CEP, 2006b; 2007c). These reports are available at www.cep-dc.org.

Initially, CEP chose to study restructuring in Michigan, California, and Maryland because these states 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 states had schools reach the restructuring phase of NCLB sooner than most other states. As other states see more schools enter restructuring, they can learn from the experiences of these states in the vanguard.

To collect information about restructuring in Michigan, CEP consultants Caitlin Scott and Maureen Kelleher interviewed state department of education officials. To learn more about the details, challenges, and effects of restructuring at the local level, they also conducted telephone and on-site interviews with school district administrators, principals, and other staff in four districts and nine schools:

- Detroit Public Schools, the largest district in Michigan, suffers from declining enrollment and currently serves about 105,000 students. Cerveny 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 district serving about 17,000 students. The district recently restructured its middle schools into "Foundation Academies." Central, Northwestern, and Southwestern Foundation Academies participated in our case study.

- Harrison Community Schools, a district of about 1,800 students, serves a rural area in central Michigan. Hillside Elementary, a school that exited restructuring in 2005-06, was the focus of our study.

- Willow Run Community Schools, a suburban district in Ypsilanti, Michigan, enrolls 2,200 students. Willow Run Middle School and Willow Run High School participated in our case study.

Flint, Harrison, and Willow Run were involved in all of CEP's previous studies 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 urban, rural, and suburban districts and were all on track for implementing restructuring plans in 2004-05. For the 2006-07 study, CEP added Detroit Public Schools, the Michigan district with the most schools in restructuring. In Flint and Detroit, which have many schools in restructuring, district personnel chose restructuring schools for participation in this study. In the smaller districts, Harrison and Willow Run, all schools in restructuring participated.

In addition to conducting interviews and document reviews, Kelleher observed the Michigan School Improvement Conference: Understanding and Using Tools to Support Continuous Improvement, sponsored by MDE. The conference, which was held on November 26, 2007, in East Lansing, featured presentations about Michigan's resources for school improvement planning and focused on using data to improve schools. About 800 educators attended the conference.

As part of this study, Scott and Kelleher also reviewed state, district, and school data and documents, such as state restructuring and school improvement policies, state records that track restructuring implementation, state report cards, and state test score data. The interviews, observations, document reviews, and data analysis were conducted from September 2007 through February 2008.

Overview of Restructuring in Michigan

Michigan's policies for restructuring schools take the requirements in federal law as a starting place for developing more detailed and prescriptive strategies for assisting and monitoring schools in restructuring. After identifying schools for restructuring, the state uses grants to schools, made through intermediate school districts, to shape the schools' specific strategies for restructuring. With regionally based partners, such as the staff of the state's ISDs, state officials monitor the implementation of these strategies and provide technical assistance tailored to schools' needs.

IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS FOR RESTRUCTURING

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all states to test virtually all students annually in English language arts (ELA) and math in grades 3 through 8, plus once during high school. It also requires all schools and districts to meet state targets for adequate yearly progress that place them on track for ensuring that 100% of students will be academically proficient by 2014.

In Michigan, the percentage of students at each school who must score at or above proficient on state tests in order to make AYP varies based on a system that weights these percentages by grade level. This system, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in 2006, subtracts target percentages of students reaching the proficient level in each grade from actual percentages in each grade, then weights the results by grade level, and sums across grade spans. Positive sums mean that the school met AYP academic targets, while negative sums mean that the school did not meet targets. Because of weighting, each school's targets across grade spans are different based on the grade-level weightings. The overall state grade span targets, shown in **table 1**, give a rough idea of targets for schools in general. These percentages are due to

rise in 2007-08 in order for Michigan to reach the target of 100% proficient by 2014 as required by NCLB. Last year's targets were identical to those in 2005-06. To make AYP, schools must also meet a 95% test participation requirement and reach other state-determined targets in such areas as attendance and graduation rates.

The content and scoring of tests in grades 3-8 in Michigan did not change from 2006-07 to 2007-08. High school tests, however, have changed substantially. In the spring of 2007, Michigan replaced the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) for 11th graders with the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). The MME consists of three parts: a free ACT college entrance exam that all Michigan students can use when applying to colleges; a free WorkKeys assessment, which is another ACT assessment that gives students and potential employers information about students' work skills; and Michigan assessments that measure core subject areas not covered in the ACT or WorkKeys. The new test resulted in about a 9% increase in the number of high schools not making adequate yearly progress, an increase that made news headlines, but which state officials said was expected, given the more rigorous nature of the MME (Higgins & Walsh-Sarnecki, 2007).

Under NCLB, Title I schools at all levels that have not made AYP for two consecutive years are identified for improvement and are subject to sanctions. If a school continues to fall short of AYP targets and remains in improvement status, the sanctions progress from offering public school choice in year 1 of improvement, to providing tutoring services in year 2, to undertaking "corrective action" in year 3. After five consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must plan for restructuring (year 4 of NCLB improvement). After six consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must implement their restructuring plans (year 5 of improvement).

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING IN MICHIGAN

For the 2007-08 school year, 63 Michigan Title I schools, or about 3% of Michigan's Title I schools, were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring, based on their 2006-07 test scores. Although NCLB does not specify actions or sanctions for Title I schools beyond year 5 of improvement, Michigan does track this information. Of these 63 schools, one was in year 8, nine were in year 7, ten were in year 6, and nine were in year 5. More than half (34) had just moved into year 4, restructuring planning. Of the schools that just moved into year 4, the majority (27) are high schools. Having so many high schools in restructuring is new for Michigan. For the previous year, only one high school was in year 4, and no high schools had reached years 5 and above.

Geographically, most of the 63 schools (84%) were in urban areas, 16% were in suburban areas, and none were in rural areas.[2] Detroit accounted for 68% of the total, including one charter school within the city of Detroit. These proportions are similar to 2006-07, when 46 schools were in restructuring; 80% were in urban areas, while 20% were in suburban areas.

Table 1. Percentages of Michigan Students That Must Score at or Above the Proficient Level to Meet State AYP Targets

	Math		English Language Arts	
Level	2006-07	2007-08	2006-07	2007-08
Elementary	56%	65%	48%	59%
Middle School	43%	54%	43%	54%
High School	44%	55%	52%	61%

Table reads: In 2006-07, the state AYP target for elementary school students was 56% at or above the proficient level, and in 2007-08 this target is 65%.

Source: Michigan Department of Education, https://oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/guide.asp.

[2] The data on school location comes from National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data 2005, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/bat/.

Table 2 shows the number and percentages of schools in restructuring planning and implementation that were operating and receiving Title I funds. The table also displays AYP outcomes. The total numbers of schools in restructuring for 2003-04 and 2004-05 are slightly different from those reported in previous CEP studies. This is because schools have closed due to declining enrollment or are no longer Title I schools. The percentages of schools meeting AYP targets for these years, however, have not changed substantially.

These results should be used with caution. It is important to note that not all schools exiting restructuring have raised test scores enough to make AYP. For example, based on 2006-07 testing, 16 schools (or 35%) moved out of restructuring, but just 6 of these schools (or 13%) moved out because they met AYP targets two years in a row. The rest of the schools that moved out of restructuring did so because the school closed or was reconfigured.

In addition, Michigan began in 2004-05 to use a confidence interval—a statistically calculated window of leeway around a test score similar to a margin of error in a poll—which most likely has made it easier for some schools to make AYP, even if nothing else at the schools has changed. On the other hand, the most recent changes in high school testing have made it more difficult for high schools to meet AYP targets. In fact, if 27 high schools had not entered restructuring implementation in 2007-08, the number of Michigan schools in restructuring would have shrunk again to 36.

Furthermore, 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 2. AYP Results for Schools in Restructuring Planning and Implementation in Michigan

	Number of Schools in Restructuring	Percentage NOT Meeting AYP Targets on the Indicated Year's Test	Percentage Meeting AYP Targets on the Indicated Year's Test	Percentage Moving Out of Restructuring
2003-04	76	68%	32%	0%
2004-05*	109	15%	85%	24%
2005-06†	90	36%	64%	57%
2006-07	46	52%	48%	35%
2007-08‡	63	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: In 2003-04, 76 schools were in restructuring. Based on 2003-04 tests, 68% of these 76 schools did not meet all AYP targets, 32% did meet all AYP targets, and none moved out of restructuring.

* For 2004-05 testing, Michigan added a confidence interval that 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.

† 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.

‡ For 2007-08 testing, Michigan changed the 11th grade test from the MEAP to the MME, on which fewer students were able to meet targets, although the test is still administered in the spring. The new MME contains the ACT, WorkKeys (another ACT assessment), and Michigan assessments that measure core subject areas not covered in the ACT or WorkKeys.

Source: Unpublished data from the Michigan Department of Education, November 2007.

The numbers reported in table 2 are for Title I schools only. Michigan also reports whether non-Title I schools are in restructuring. Adding non-Title I schools brings the total number of Michigan schools in restructuring (years 4 and above) to more than 300. These non-Title I schools, however, do not have to comply with most NCLB requirements and do not receive any special funding for restructuring. The growing number of non-Title I schools in restructuring in Michigan is a concern, Underwood said, but she emphasized that there is currently no funding available for the state to assist these schools.

STATE RESTRUCTURING OPTIONS

To define restructuring more clearly, the Michigan Department of Education expanded on the federal "any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement that makes fundamental reform," the so-called "any-other" option. 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 3** lists Michigan's elaboration on federal restructuring options and shows the percentage of restructuring schools selecting each strategy for 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The proportions of schools choosing many of these options remained stable from 2005-06 to 2006-07. The top choice for restructuring remained appointing or employing an independent turnaround specialist. In 2006-07, MDE required some districts like Detroit to choose turnaround specialists. For 2007-08, Underwood said no districts were required to have turnaround specialists, but she added, "We strongly suggested employing a coach or turnaround specialist."

In Michigan, Underwood noted that they use "coach" and "turnaround specialist" to mean approximately same thing. All coaches originally came from the Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools (ABCS),

Table 3. Michigan Restructuring Options and Percentage of Restructuring Schools Using Each, 2005-06 and 2006-07

Federal Restructuring Options*	Michigan Restructuring Options	Percentage of Schools Using This Option, 2005-06	Percentage of Schools Using This Option, 2006-07	Percentage Point Change 2005-06 to 2006-07
Any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement that makes fundamental reform	Appoint/employ an independent turnaround specialist	85%†	87%	2%
	Use an external research-based reform model	11%	9%	-2%
	Implement any other major effort that significantly changes the governance of the school (other than those listed in this table)	23%	7%	-16%
	Appoint a new principal	8%	2%	-6%
	Turn operation over to the school's School Improvement Committee/Team	10%	0%	-10%
	Restructure the governance of the school by appointing a governing board	6%	0%	-6%

Table 3. Continued

Federal Restructuring Options*	Michigan Restructuring Options	Percentage of Schools Using This Option, 2005-06	Percentage of Schools Using This Option, 2006-07	Percentage Point Change 2005-06 to 2006-07
	Close the school and reopen it as a complete school of choice within district governance	1%	0%	-1%
	Suspend the office of the principal; indicate how the school will be governed	0%	0%	0%
Replace all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	Replace all or most of the school staff, including the principal, who are relevant to the failure to make adequate yearly progress	6%	7%	1%
Reopen the school as a charter school	Close the school and reopen it as a charter	0%	0%	0%
Enter into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school	Turn the school's operation over to a private management company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness	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.	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: In 2005-06, 85% of restructuring schools appointed or employed an independent turnaround specialist as their choice for restructuring. In 2006-07, 87% of schools made this choice, amounting to a 2 percentage point increase from the previous year.

* There are fewer restructuring strategies in 2006-07 than in earlier CEP reports on restructuring in Michigan. Previously, CEP received data from MDE which included corrective action options (also called school improvement year 3 options). Restructuring schools continued these corrective actions in their restructuring plans and during restructuring implementation. This year, however, CEP's data does not include corrective action options. In addition, MDE has collapsed the previous years' "coaching option" into the turnaround option, so the option of "appointing/employing an independent turnaround specialist" now includes coaches.

† This percentage differs from the percentage published in our previous report because it combines "turnaround specialists" and "coaches."

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 2006-07.

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy, based on unpublished data from the Michigan Department of Education, November 2007.

which was established to formally train coaches for schools in restructuring in Michigan in 2004-05 and is an alliance of 13 different organizations, including higher education institutions, teachers' unions, parent groups, public schools, and professional associations. Now, ISDs can also appoint coaches. ABCS coaches are still active in Michigan, but currently schools can employ either ISD or ABCS coaches who both provide the same technical assistance to schools in restructuring. These coaches have had consistent research-based training through the Coaches Institute presented by Michigan State University.

Several other options used by a smaller number of schools have seen no change or only slight change from 2005-06 to 2006-07. No schools chose to suspend the office of the principal, to become charters, or to contract with an outside entity to run the school. There were small decreases in the proportions of schools that used research-based reforms (from 11% to 9%) and became schools of choice (from 1% to 0%). There was a slight increase in the percentage of schools that replaced staff (from 6% to 7%).

Two notable changes occurred in schools' restructuring choices from 2005-06 to 2006-07. First, the percentage of schools using the "any other" option decreased from 23% to 7%. Underwood noted that MDE has discouraged districts from using this option because it is relatively vague and the state would like to have more information about what schools are doing.

Second, the percentage of schools turning the operation of their school over to the school improvement team decreased by 10 percentage points. While this could be interpreted as resulting from dissatisfaction with this restructuring option, it is important to note that all nine schools using this option (alone or in combination with other options) exited restructuring either by closing or by making AYP two years in a row.

EFFECTIVENESS OF OPTIONS CHOSEN BY SCHOOLS

Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, changes in testing dates in Michigan make analysis of one year of individual strategies suspect. Testing for elementary and middle grades for school year 2005-06 occurred in October 2005, so Michigan schools did not have very long to implement their strategies before the fall tests. For our 2007 report we decided, therefore, to examine the use of multiple strategies over a two-year period. 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, we eliminated schools from the analysis if they had met AYP targets the previous year and might exit restructuring before 2005-06 testing.

Our analysis for 2005-06 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.[3] All (100%) of the restructuring schools that exited restructuring had implemented five or more strategies over the past two years, compared with 64% of restructuring schools in general. Among those implementing four or fewer options, only 49% exited restructuring.

Our analysis for 2006-07 employed a similar method. We analyzed the AYP performance of the 39 schools that were in restructuring in 2005-06 and needed to make AYP two years in a row to exit restructuring based on 2006-07 testing. In general, a larger percentage of schools that employed three or more strategies over the past two years (57%) exited restructuring. In contrast, just 22% of schools using two or fewer strategies exited restructuring. Unfortunately, due to the small sample size (only 39 schools), statistical testing was not possible.

FUNDING FOR RESTRUCTURING

Michigan's restructuring efforts take place in a context of declining enrollment and financial difficulties statewide. In the 2007-08 school year, Michigan's public K-12 enrollment dropped by about 25,000 students, to about 1.65 million students. This is the fifth year in a row of enrollment decline, the longest sustained drop since the 11-year period between 1977 and 1986, when the state lost 350,000 public school students. Experts attribute the decrease to both a declining birthrate and young families leaving Michigan's troubled economy (Dawsey & Walsh-Sarnecki, 2007).

[3] The analysis used Chi square ($\chi 2$);$\chi 2$ (1, N = 82) = 17.16, $p < 0.001$.

Declines in population have resulted in a state budget crisis. The budget approved in November had flat funding for public schools, but news reports noted that this funding had fallen well short of increases in school spending due to inflation and rising health care costs, and reporters predicted district layoffs as well as contentious contract negotiations (Christoff & Gray, 2007).

For 2007-08, however, federal Title I, Part A funds increased by about 10%. State officials said this increase is helpful, but long overdue, since funding had previously been flat or had declined, as shown in **table 4**. State officials also said that the Title I increases did not make up for the state budget difficulties in recent years. Officials in all four districts participating in our study, for example, reported feeling the negative effects of flat state funding, despite Title I increases.

Beginning in 2004, all states were required by federal law to set aside 4% of Title I funds to assist districts and schools in improvement, including schools in restructuring.[4] Due to overall increases in Title I funding, Michigan's set-aside for schools in improvement increased from about $15 million in 2006-07 to roughly $17 million in 2007-08. How states use these funds to monitor and assist restructuring is a state decision, and states have taken a range of approaches. Some states help schools design restructuring plans and explicitly sign off on those plans, while others do not collect any information on schools in restructuring beyond what they collect from other schools in improvement.

Since 2003-04, MDE has used a small portion of this Title I set-aside to offer grants to assist schools in various stages of NCLB improvement. Grants currently range from $5,000 to $45,000. In order to receive the funds, districts and schools had to write grants specifically stating what would be done to improve the schools, and the grants 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. "We've got five or six districts that we typically negotiate with," explained Underwood. "Sometimes it takes a while of going back and forth. It's a huge strain." This extra effort is worth it, Underwood said, because it ensures that funds are well spent. As in the past, the amount of funding schools received in 2007-08 varied based on the size of the school and the reason for low academic achievement, as shown in **table 5**.

As in 2006-07, the majority of the state set-aside for schools in improvement in 2007-08, approximately $14 million, went to the state's ISDs, the regional education agencies that provide professional development and other services to schools and districts. These services, including audits, Process Mentor Teams, the Principals Fellowship, and coaches, are described in more detail in a later section of this report.

Table 4. Total Title I, Part A Allocations for Michigan School Districts

	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%
2007-08	$438,174,010	9.7%

Table reads: In 2002-03, the total allocations of Title I, Part A funds to Michigan districts were $401,886,593. This was a 17.5% gain from the previous year.

Source: Michigan Department of Education Web Site, www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334-127227—,00.html.

[4] Although all states were required to set aside 4%, some were not able to do so because of a hold-harmless provision in NCLB. This situation is explained in more detail in two CEP reports (2006c; 2007d) available at www.cep-dc.org.

Table 5. School Improvement Grants in Michigan, 2007-08

Amount of Funding	School Eligibility
$5,000	School failed to meet AYP targets due to non-academic reasons only, i.e., 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 2007.

In addition to Title I, Part A funding, Michigan was one of 20 states to receive a grant for schools in improvement on January 16, 2008. Twenty-one other states received these grants on December 20, 2007. Michigan will use the funds to continue school improvement efforts that have been identified, such as academic and data coaches and supports to English language learners and special populations.

STATE ASSISTANCE IN RESTRUCTURING

In addition to the federal requirement to write a restructuring plan, Michigan has developed several more requirements for schools in restructuring. These requirements are aimed both at assisting schools in restructuring and ensuring that schools and districts do what is required of them under restructuring. In a national sample, the Government Accountability Office (2007) found that 40% of schools in restructuring did not actually implement any of the federal options. Underwood said schools were closely monitored in Michigan, so failure to implement strategies was highly unlikely. This monitoring, however, is not done solely by MDE. Because of a hiring freeze, MDE does not have the capacity to monitor all schools in restructuring; instead, Underwood explained, "we work closely with the ISDs to expand our capacity with limited state staff."

Additional Michigan requirements of schools in restructuring include submitting to a school audit, receiving assistance from a Process Mentor Team, collaborating with a leadership coach, and sending the principal to a two week-long Principals Fellowship during the summer. All these additional requirements were designed around Michigan's School Improvement Framework, a tool for improving schools based on national and state research about the typical characteristics of successful schools. "The Framework provided the organizing principles for training coaches and principals, for conducting the program audits, and for engaging with the process mentors. It brings continuity and cohesion to the Michigan system of support for high priority schools," said Mike Radke, assistant director of the Office of School Improvement Field Services Unit. The Michigan requirements for restructuring are shown in more detail in **table 6**.

To oversee these new processes, MDE has organized a core leadership team that meets once a month. It includes staff from MDE; from the ISDs; from Michigan State University; from the School Improvement Facilitators Network (a professional organization for educators); from AdvancEd Worldwide, the parent company of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement; and from the Michigan Integrated Behavioral Learning Support Initiative, an initiative promoting Response to Intervention, a method of providing interventions for students who are struggling in school. While the core leadership team is large and diverse, Underwood said all the members were necessary to represent the many educational initiatives that assist schools in restructuring. "We're looking at cohesion," she said.

Table 6. Michigan's Requirements of Schools in Restructuring Planning (Year 4) and Restructuring Implementation (Year 5 and up)

	Year 4	Year 5 and up
School is required to offer choice and SES	✓	✓
School receives comprehensive audit	✓	✓
Process Mentor Team	8 times per year	4 times per year
School receives a leadership coach	✓	✓
Principal attends Principals Fellowship	✓	✓
School receives $30,000 or more for strategies	✓	✓
School implements corrective action plan	✓	
School selects restructuring option	✓	
School implements restructuring plan		✓

Source: Statewide Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools, Michigan Department of Education, October 2007.

School Audits

Beginning in 2006-07, schools in improvement in years 3 and up were audited. Comprehensive audits were for schools not making AYP due to the performance of all students, while targeted audits applied to schools missing AYP for just one subgroup.

The audit instrument, which MDE piloted in 2005-06, was designed to reflect the School Improvement Framework. The audit instrument was revised from 2006-07 using lessons learned from the previous year, Underwood said. The goal of the revision was to tie the audits even more closely to the School Improvement Framework. In addition, Underwood said a separate instrument was created by MDE's offices for special education and for English language learners (ELLs). These instruments provided targeted audits of schools that missed AYP only because of the performance of students with disabilities or ELLs.

The role of the auditors is both to gather data for MDE and to accurately report their observations and findings to the school and the Process Mentor Teams. Auditors are typically experienced Michigan educators, Underwood explained. They all received additional training in using the audit instruments in September 2007.

To conduct the audits, 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. "Auditors are a neutral party," Underwood said, emphasizing that this outsider look at schools is essential to help the Process Mentor Teams help schools. "It gives them a snapshot of their school."

Process Mentor Teams

This year, 2007-08, Process Mentor Teams have been added to take the information from the audits and use it to assist schools. "These are the people who provide support and encouragement and help schools use their data to make decisions," Underwood said. The team consists of three people: a district-level person, a representative from MDE, and a person from the district's ISD. In addition to the information from the audit, the teams review the entire school improvement process, meet with and collaboratively set short- term goals with the school representatives, provide ongoing reviews of data, and advise the school on processes and procedures to help accomplish short-term goals between visits.

Because the Process Mentor Team includes people from the district, region, and state, it has the power to coordinate reforms. The teams hold the school leadership accountable for making changes, help remove barriers at the district level, and provide access to needed resources at all levels, Radke explained. Examples of the work of these teams are given in the sections on Detroit, Flint, and Willow Run later in this report.

Leadership Coaches

The ISDs provide schools in years 3 and above with leadership coaches. Trained in a two-week residential summer academy, these coaches continued to receive training nearly every month throughout the year, according to Tom Buffett of Michigan State, who leads the training. Leadership coaches were either identified by the ISD or through the ABCS coaching program and were contracted to be on-site and assist the principal for 100 days. Underwood emphasized that the coaches focus on school governance and school leadership, which are the key principles in the School Improvement Framework's leadership strand. District and school officials commented on leadership coaches later in this report in the sections on Detroit and Flint.

Principals Fellowship

Principals of Title I Michigan schools in years 3 and above were also invited to attend the same two-week residential summer academy as the leadership coaches. The purpose of the Principals Fellowship was "to bring principals and coaches together so that there's a common frame of reference for improvement efforts," said Buffett, who directs the Fellowship. The goal was to match principals and coaches and have them work together at the academy in "learning teams," Buffett said.

For 2007-08, the first year of implementation, the Principals Fellowship was not able to fulfill all its goals. First, due to contractual regulations in Detroit, the Fellowship was cut to one week for Detroit principals, so a separate event was held for Detroit. All principals of schools in year 3 and beyond in Detroit were required to attend, and the ISD matched principals and coaches before the Fellowship. Buffett said all topics were covered by condensing the program.

Second, in non-Detroit schools, most coaches and principals were not matched until September. Finally, because the Fellowship was announced in May and began in July, some principals had summer plans and were not able to attend. Therefore, the Fellowship expanded to invite principals from all schools in improvement, many of which did not have coaches.

Although not all principals interviewed for this report were able to attend all of the session, most appreciated the opportunity for additional professional development. Time to work on their school's particular challenges also received positive reviews from principals. "I enjoyed the chance to talk with other schools and have some time to learn and plan with my coach," said Sandra Hodges, Principal of Central Foundation Academy in Flint.

Common Themes from Restructuring Districts and Schools

Several common themes emerged from our studies of four Michigan districts and nine schools.

Declining enrollments and the resulting financial difficulties continue to challenge all districts in this study. Due to declining enrollment, the Harrison district closed a school in 2002-03. Detroit closed schools in both 2006-07 and 2007-08. Flint closed schools in 2006-07, and further closures are being discussed. Deciding which schools in Harrison, Flint, and Detroit to close has not been based entirely on the schools' effectiveness. Instead, district officials said they had to take enrollment patterns into consideration as well. Officials in both districts described the closures as very difficult for many parents and teachers to accept. Although Willow Run has not closed schools, the district did close its administrative building and move the offices into vacant classrooms in the high school in 2006-07, and in 2007-08 the district combined the administration of its middle and high school.

In addition to their agreement that their districts faced financial difficulties, district and school representatives we interviewed all appreciated the increased assistance from state and regional agencies. Often they said it was easier for the district to get these services from their ISD rather than find outside contractors to provide services,

as had been the practice in previous years. Several, however, noted that state and regional assistance, particularly that provided by the Process Mentor Teams and leadership coaches, was slow in starting. In some schools these services did not begin until the start of the second semester of school, and some reported in February that they still had not received visits from their Process Mentor Teams. Many district and school officials said it would have been better if these services had started at the beginning of the year.

As in previous years, no district or school officials said that their official NCLB restructuring strategies alone would transform their schools. This year, perhaps due to MDE's new initiatives, all districts and schools talked about their restructuring as an ongoing process that would be revisited throughout the year, rather than a single strategy or even a collection of year-long strategies. Schools and districts typically said they would use teams of educators, such as school improvement teams or Process Mentor Teams, to monitor and revise restructuring efforts as the year progressed. Typical ongoing strategies included using data to make instructional decisions, increasing teacher collaboration, and sharing decision making at the school.

REPLACING STAFF, COACHING, AND SCHOOL AUDITS IN DETROIT

Located in southeastern Michigan, Detroit is the state's largest school district. Since 2000, the district has lost about 50,000 students, roughly a third of the student population (Dawsey & Maxwell, 2007). Some students have left the city, while others attend charter schools or schools in neighboring districts. Last spring, Detroit Public Schools initiated a "Come Home to DPS" public relations and recruitment campaign in hopes of winning back students.

Addressing the district's history of fiscal mismanagement and restoring public confidence in the system remain huge challenges for Detroit, according to Superintendent Connie Calloway, who started her term in summer 2007. By state law, if enrollment dips below 100,000, more charters can open, draining resources from the already strapped district (Dawsey & Maxwell, 2007).

The majority of students in Detroit (90%) are African American, 7% are Latino, and 2% are white. Also, 80% are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches, an indicator of poverty.

Based on 2006-07 testing, 23 Detroit schools are in year 4 of NCLB improvement, the restructuring planning year. Five schools are in year 5,the first year of restructuring implementation. In Detroit, four schools are in year 6 of school improvement, nine are in year 7, and one is in year 8. Detroit would have had more schools in restructuring if the district had not had to close schools due to declining enrollment. Although academic achievement was taken into consideration for school closure, other factors, such as the condition of the buildings and student enrollment, were instrumental to decisions as well, Detroit officials reported.

Two of the schools participating in this study made AYP last year but will need to do so for a second year in order to exit restructuring—Beckham Academy, now in year 5, and Cerveny Middle School, now in year 6. Cleveland Intermediate/High School did not make AYP in 2006-07 and is now in year 7 of school improvement. Like the district, these schools serve a primarily African American, low-income student population. In addition, about 12% of the Cleveland Intermediate/High students are Bangladeshi. State test results of these schools are shown in **table 7**.

School Closings "Bump" Newly Replaced Staff

Both Cerveny and Cleveland were among the five Detroit schools in restructuring that replaced staff as their primary restructuring strategy in 2006-07. A few years ago, the Detroit Federation of Teachers agreed that in this handful of long-struggling schools, the district would be allowed to require all teachers to reapply for their jobs. Any teachers not rehired would be involuntarily transferred to other schools.

Principals and teachers in both schools where staff were replaced agreed the changes positively affected instruction, teacher collaboration, and school climate. But when 33 other schools closed due to declining enrollments and the fiscal crisis and veteran teachers lost their jobs, the new teachers at Cerveny and Cleveland were not protected from seniority "bumping." Cleveland Principal Donna Thornton said she lost one counselor and five "young, motivated" teachers. Although she chose from a list of displaced teachers to fill those positions, she and lead science teacher Paula Sarratt agreed the school lost ground with the change in staff.

Table 7. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Three Detroit Schools, 2005-07

Grade	2005-06 Percentage Proficient in Reading	2005-06 Percentage Proficient in Math	2006-07 Percentage Proficient in Reading	2006-07 Percentage Proficient in Math
William Beckham Academy				
3	75%	65%	82%	74%
4	59%	50%	83%	74%
5	52%	35%	75%	47%
Cerveny Middle School				
6	46%	8%	43%	12%
7	37%	8%	63%	22%
8	42%	19%	56%	33%
Cleveland Middle School				
6	47%	24%	49%	40%
7	39%	16%	52%	31%
8	45%	32%	45%	27%

Table reads: In grade 3 at William Beckham Academy, 2005-06 tests showed that 75% of students were proficient in reading and 65% were proficient in math.

Source: Michigan Department of Education, http://michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168—-,00.html

Cerveny Middle had a similar experience, but Principal Gladys Stoner said she had "no control over" which displaced teachers joined her faculty. She lost 13 of 27 teachers on staff last year. Getting the new staff on board with the school's vision for improvement has been difficult. "People from last year hit the floor running. People new to the staff had to be indoctrinated. We're working on sharing the vision with them." Stoner and veteran Cerveny teacher Karen Gay agreed that there have been problems with teacher attendance and motivation this year.

In addition in late November 2007, Stoner said three new teachers were on long-term medical leave, which started soon after they were hired. "Their classes," she noted, "are being taught by subs."

Student enrollment has also fluctuated. Though additional students from closed schools arrived on the first day, additional money for teachers was slow to catch up. "Some of the classes had over 40 kids in them because we didn't get funding for the students we had coming in," Gay added.

Because Michigan gives its elementary and middle school state test in mid-October, the few weeks right before testing coincided with the chaotic first few weeks of the new school year, when staff changes and overcrowding hampered teaching. "The struggle has been a lot more challenging" this year than last, Stoner observed.

Most of the teacher leaders who have been part of school improvement planning are still at Cerveny though, and Gay hopes those core faculty can bring new teachers on board. "We're still here and we're still dedicated . . . I believe at the end of the year, after they've worked on some committees, [restructuring could] have an effect."

At Cleveland, faculty cohesion has also been affected by a change in the grades served at the school. Last January, Cleveland was under threat of closure. In response, Thornton developed a plan for the school to change to a 7th through 12th grade configuration. The plan was approved, and Cleveland opened this year as a combined middle and high school, adding faculty for grades 9-12. According to Thornton, students who have returned from charter schools now make up 13% of Cleveland's current enrollment.

Coaching and Data Analysis

In 2007-08, the regional education authority, Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), assumed responsibility for funding principal and content coaches for "high priority schools," which are all schools that have not made AYP, including schools in restructuring. In last year's report, Detroit district staff gave coaches, also called turnaround specialists, mixed reviews.

Again this year, principal coaches have been effective "to some degree," said Juanita Clay Chambers, Detroit's associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction, who retired in December 2007. The state's funding to support the program, provided through Wayne RESA, is also welcome. "We don't have to pay for the coaches, content specialists, and professional development for high-priority schools," she said. This has freed up district resources to prevent other schools from losing ground. "District specialists have been going into other schools," Chambers noted. "We don't want to not help someone and then have them fall into not making AYP."

Principals at all three Detroit schools in our study found their coaches helpful. Although principal coaching at Cerveny and Cleveland was overshadowed as a restructuring strategy by the impact of replacing staff, both principals said their coaches had helped them analyze student data to guide instructional decision making. "I want the staff to focus on data, because that is where our needs are," said Principal Donna Thornton of Cleveland.

Coaches can also help facilitate the often tense relationships between a principal and faculty members. "She's very diplomatic," Principal Gladys Stoner said of her coach, who has helped with data analysis, grant writing, and communication between administration and faculty at Cerveny.

At Beckham Academy, the use of a turnaround specialist was the school's only official restructuring strategy. Beckham's turnaround specialist was the principal coach provided by the regional educational service agency. Having a coach has been "wonderful," said Principal William Batchelor. "That has been one of the best things, because it is someone who has sat in the [same] chair." His coach is a retired Detroit Public Schools principal. Having that supportive ear fills a critical need, he added, "I need support. I get no other support." Although Batchelor said he would like more time with his coach, he added that "it would be OK" if Beckham makes AYP for a second year in a row, exits restructuring, and thus loses the coach.

At Beckham, teachers noted that Batchelor has shared leadership with them more and more over time, but teachers did not directly attribute that change to the presence of the principal coach. Math teacher Bill Roby attributed the roots of the change to the initial implementation of the Comer process, a whole-school reform initiative that focuses on creating a collaborative staff culture and empowering students. Comer began at Beckham a decade ago and involved the creation of a school planning and management team. "It was difficult at first. Mr. Batchelor didn't want to let go," Roby recalled. "But he soon figured out it was easier" to delegate and share leadership with the teachers.

Two years ago, Batchelor was hesitant to allow teachers in 4th and 5th grades to move out of self-contained classes toward a more departmentalized model where teachers could teach students in their area of expertise, said Elaine Bray, a veteran teacher who now serves as the school's literacy coach. Now that hesitation is gone. "By second semester we'll be almost departmentalized in grades three to five. That came out of [Batchelor's] growth, too." Bray attributes the change to the principal professional development required by Reading First. "That really opened his eyes," she said.

School planning team members Roby, Bray, and data analyst Jacqueline Blakley have all been involved in both the planning and execution of key school-level strategies to which they attribute Beckham's progress. Batchelor and these teacher-leaders agreed that participation in Reading First has been a key component of their success in raising student achievement. Beckham is one of 34 Detroit public schools using the program, and participation is not limited to schools in restructuring.

In the past, Beckham had missed AYP in part because students with disabilities were not meeting benchmarks. Blakley, Beckham's in-house data analyst, disaggregated data on students with individualized education programs (IEPs) and discovered that students who were receiving pullout support were more of a factor in the lack of progress than special education students in self-contained special education classes. To address the problem, Blakley said, "We identified those children [receiving pull-out services] at the very beginning of the school year and informed each teacher" of each specific student's needs. Blakeley also made sure classrooms with high numbers of such students were among those where she made a special effort to come in and teach writing lessons. All students with disabilities were also incorporated into Reading First instruction and leveled groups.

District officials have taken note of the progress at Beckham and also attribute it in part to support from Reading First. "There's funding. There's a literacy coach. We've seen some real growth there," said Chambers. The use of DIBELS, a diagnostic assessment, to check early readers' progress and create homogeneous groupings for reading instruction worked so well that Beckham teachers use these techniques with 4th and 5th graders. "It's a strategy that's been proven to show some results," Chambers noted.

School Audits

As of late November 2007, auditors had not visited any of the Detroit schools in our study. This was in striking contrast to the previous year, when auditors visited three times. "It's different this year. I haven't seen them yet," said Cerveny's Stoner.

Cleveland's Thornton said she felt the audit process could not go as deeply into her school's needs as her in-house assessments have done. "We identify what we want to do in school improvements," she said. "It's not just professional development, it's programs for kids. A lot of it is parental involvement."

At the district level, Chambers said there has been progress in district efforts to train principals and a second staffer of their choosing on the analysis and use of data. The district held a daylong training for them on November 6, 2007. "That was a major piece, just to get everyone on the same page as to how to review data and proceed with action strategies," she observed.

MAINTAINING ACHIEVEMENTS IN HARRISON

Harrison Community Schools is a rural school district serving about 1,800 students in central Michigan. The vast majority of the students (97%) are white. About 60% are low-income, so the district faces challenges related to poverty. In addition, 21% are students with disabilities. Due to declining enrollment 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. By 2005-06 testing, both schools had moved off the state's list of schools in need of improvement.

Since the 2005-06 school year, no schools in Harrison have been identified for restructuring, and only Hillside failed to meet all AYP targets based on 2006-07 testing. This failure was due to the performance of students with disabilities in English language arts. The general population at Hillside substantially increased the percentage of proficient students. As shown in **table 8**, 93% to 97% of Hillside's students, depending on grade level, scored at or above the proficient level on state reading tests in 2006-07, and 87% to 98% reached proficiency in math. Furthermore, in both reading and math in all grades the percentage of proficient students increased by at least 13 percentage points. Test scores for Larson are not shown because the school serves students in kindergarten and 1st grades, which are not tested in Michigan and are not required to be tested under NCLB. Larson was identified for restructuring based on the fact that its K-1 students feed into Hillside. We will primarily discuss changes at Hillside in the rest of this section.

Harrison has used a variety of strategies to improve its two schools in restructuring and to move them out and keep them out of school improvement. In school year 2002-03, to comply with the NCLB requirements for restructuring, the schools chose to add a new governance board. Superintendent Christopher Rundle appointed this board to make major decisions about school 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.

Table 8. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests at Hillside Elementary, 2005-07

Grade	2005-06 Percentage Proficient in Reading	2005-06 Percentage Proficient in Math	2006-07 Percentage Proficient in Reading	2006-07 Percentage Proficient in Math
3	76%	83%	97%	96%
4	75%	74%	96%	98%
5	74%	67%	93%	87%

Table reads: In grade 3 at Hillside Elementary, 2005-06 tests showed that 76% of students were proficient in reading and 83% were proficient in math.

Source: Michigan Department of Education, http://michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168—-,00.html

The board, however, was not one of the initiatives that lasted in Harrison. "I believe the only thing that fell away was the alternative governance board," Hillside Principal Michele Sandro said. "We did not find it to be effective, basically because they didn't meet." Sandro said that the board had difficulty finding time to meet due to busy schedules and that some meetings were contentious and unproductive. Instead, Sandro attributed her students' academic success to other initiatives. Most importantly, these were peer literacy coaches, grade-level professional learning communities, the Smart Schools/Smart Teams/Smart Goals process (SMART), and an external expert the district hired to shepherd these initiatives.

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. Later all teachers were encouraged to attend training and become coaches. This initiative 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 at Larson in 2006-07, but currently all but a few teachers at Hillside and Larson participate, Sandro said. "They're working in small teams. They do a pre-coaching session, talking about the lesson that's going to be taught, then they observe the lesson, and then they do a follow-up discussion. Everyone is learning." Sandro explained that when coaching takes place the school hires a substitute for the day who rotates through classrooms, allowing teachers to observe their peers.

Grade-Level Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities evolved from Hillside's grade-level teams. For 2007-08, each grade-level team has formed a professional learning community which meets twice a month for about 90 minutes during the school day. The school hires substitutes who rotate through the grade levels so that all teachers can attend their professional learning community meetings. During meetings, 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. They also shared information that would help teachers grow professionally, such as current research about student performance or new curricular materials. "I believe that every person in the building would say that professional learning communities are absolutely part of our culture, that they are necessary to our work, and that they're of great benefit to teaching and learning at Hillside," Sandro said.

SMART Program

Adopted in Harrison about the same time as restructuring, SMART is a professional development program offered by a national corporation, Quality Leadership by Design, based in Wisconsin. The initiative is districtwide, although schools are in different

stages of implementation, Sandro said. At Hillside, the SMART core team meets to set school goals and to plan staff agendas and in-service training. "SMART is a school improvement process that gets right down to the classroom level. It goes from broad to very fine," Sandro said. To get down to the classroom level, the goals developed through SMART have been adopted by grade-level professional learning communities, Sandro explained.

External Expert

Sandro credits private consultant Nancy Colflesh with bringing the many reforms at Hillside together and keeping them on track. "We found the outside expert to be most effective," Sandro said. "She was highly trained, and we had a great relationship with her, so she's been able to move us from where we were to closer to where we want to be." Sandro explained that the district began working with Colflesh prior to restructuring as part of the comprehensive school reform grant shared by Larson and Hillside elementary schools, so the district knew her work and knew she would be effective in helping the school with restructuring.

Now that funding for restructuring is finished at Hillside, Colflesh's assistance has been cut back. Of the four current major initiatives at Hillside, the external expert is the only one that Sandro is uncertain will continue. This would be a loss at Hillside, Sandro said. "People depended on her, people liked her. She always brought fresh ideas from other places. She had wonderful resources that she connected us with, and so my choice would be to try to get her back—at least for one or two times a year, but we'll work on that."

Attention to Students with Disabilities

Another area of concern at Hillside is the achievement of students with disabilities, the subgroup that did not meet AYP targets in ELA based on 2006-07 testing. Around the time of restructuring, Hillside shifted to an inclusion model for students with disabilities in which general and special education teachers team-taught, said special education teacher Lisa Kreider. With this new program, the percentages of special education students scoring proficient or above on state tests initially increased. Kreider expressed enthusiasm for the change. "In the past, I would have students in all different grades in all different classrooms, and I really wouldn't be able to follow their curriculum," Kreider explained. "Being in only one classroom, I know exactly what's happening. My teaching partner and I sit down and actually plan out the week together."

Why the lag in performance of special education students last year? Neither Kreider nor Sandro said they knew exactly why, but Kreider speculated, "I think part of it is they are bumping up our case loads. So we are servicing really too many children. Under the law, we're within our limits, but it's just too many to really focus on them all."

Hillside will continue the inclusive team-teaching model, Sandro said, but will add a new initiative aimed at helping special education students as well as students at risk for being identified for special education. Teachers are currently being trained in Response to Intervention (RTI), a national initiative that uses diagnostic test data to determine which students need extra help, provides interventions to these students, and then monitors student progress. Some interventions are already in place, Sandro said.

Sandro said that RTI helps both general and special education students, which makes it ideal for Hillside. She explained that the largest group of special education students at the school will move on to middle school next year, so RTI may help keep the numbers of students identified for special education lower. "When you fail with your special education kids, like we did at MEAP time, what you don't want to do is just focus on those kids," Sandro said. "All of our students must have access to the best instruction, but also, when they need intervention and/or remediation, that must be available to them too. We are not there yet."

FOUNDATION ACADEMIES, DISTRICT OVERSIGHT, AND STATE ASSISTANCE IN FLINT

Located in southeastern Michigan, Flint was once a center for heavy industry, but the city has been losing jobs since the decline of automobile manufacturing in the U.S. Economic declines have resulted in large numbers of families leaving the city, and Flint Community Schools face challenges due to declining enrollment and declining revenues. Addressing these challenges is paramount in the city's schools, where 70% of the district's approximately 17,000 students

are eligible to receive free lunch. The school's students are predominately African American (81%). About 16% are white, and the rest are Latino, Asian, and other races.

Based on 2004-05 testing, all elementary schools in Flint made AYP. This was a first for Flint, where elementary schools have typically struggled to meet rising AYP targets. Brownell Elementary, which participated in this study previously, had never before met all AYP targets. Brownell again met AYP targets on 2005-06 tests and exited restructuring. Flint's middle schools, however, have had greater difficulty meeting AYP targets.

Based on 2005-06 testing, the district's four middle schools remained in restructuring, and the district took action in 2006-07, opting to close all four schools and reassign 7th and 8th graders to newly created "Foundation Academies" housed in high school buildings. The percentages of students reaching proficiency in 7th and 8th grades in Flint did not change much from 2005-06 and 2006-07 with the creation of the Foundation Academies, as shown in **table 9**. In the three Foundation Academies participating in our study, percentages of proficient students were slightly lower than the district average, with the exception of Southwestern, where percentages were slightly higher.

Creating Foundation Academies

For 2006-07, the district decided to abandon efforts at restructuring four of the district's middle schools and moved students to new school sites as part of the districtwide initiative to eliminate traditional middle schools. District officials explained that the change would allow the district to have small schools-within-schools, which they believed would improve student achievement, but they also said this move simply helped Flint deal with declining enrollment and rev-

Table 9. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Flint's Middle Schools, 2005-07

	2005-06		2006-07	
Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
All 7th and 8th graders				
7	49%	23%	48%	23%
8	40%	27%	41%	27%
Central				
7	NA	NA	35%	13%
8	NA	NA	36%	26%
Northwestern				
7	NA	NA	48%	18%
8	NA	NA	39%	19%
Southwestern				
7	NA	NA	49%	24%
8	NA	NA	52%	36%

Table reads: In grade 7 at Central Academy, 2006-07 tests showed that 35% of students were proficient in reading and 13% were proficient in math.

Source: Michigan Department of Education, http://michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168—-,00.html

enues. The four former middle school buildings closed, and middle school administrators and teachers across the district were given the option of going to the new Foundation Academies or to open positions in other district schools.

The new Foundation Academies had a rough start in the fall of 2006, according to the local newspaper (Burden, 2007) and Flint district officials. "Facilities changes probably caused the biggest problems—students not having chairs to sit in on the first day of school, and not having schedules. Many children returned that we weren't expecting, or they returned to a school that they weren't expected to return to. It wasn't a good start," said Karen Lee, the district official who oversees the Foundation Academies.

Another difficulty with the new buildings was that staff was still negotiating how the new space would be used, principals said. "Last year, we didn't really know the building. How do you get from here to there? What do we do about late students?" said Central Foundation's principal, Sandra Hodges. Central staff met for two weeks over summer to address these issues. "We planned how we were going to go up the hall, go down the hall, what entrances our kids were coming in, how we're going to designate where we need this to be, where we want that to be," explained Hodges. "Now we have a better handle on things. It's made a marked difference."

In general, the 2007-08 school year began more smoothly, district and school officials said. While the principals of the three Foundation Academies were all optimistic that these changes would help their schools improve student achievement, they still have some doubts about being housed within high school buildings. In fact, Southwestern Foundation Academy moved back to its original school building in the middle of the 2006-07 school year and has remained there for 2007-08. District officials confirmed that the district is considering returning the Foundation Academies to their original buildings and that part of the impetus for the return was based on the community's dissatisfaction with the new buildings. "We're still downsizing, or rightsizing," said David Solis, the district's director of state, federal, and local programs. "The school board is listening to the community in terms of what they would like to see as the structure of the district in the future."

A return to the middle school buildings, however, would probably lead to the closure of elementary schools to deal with the financial strain of reopening the middle schools, Lee speculated. Although she said the district had to do something to address financial shortfalls, she added that closing elementary buildings "would not be an easy sell to the community."

District Oversight

In 2007-08, Flint tightened district oversight of the Foundation Academies by appointing Lee as the district turnaround specialist, a role that is different from the official restructuring option in that Lee has not been hired from an organization outside the district. In her new role, Lee schedules and facilitates monthly meetings with the ELA and math teachers at each academy. The meetings are also attended by the district's instructional specialists, who provide professional development for best instructional practices with Lee's assistance. These meetings occur during the school day, and the schools use their Title I funds to pay for substitutes. Lee also meets with the school improvement team monthly. This team monitors the schools' progress in implementing the school improvement teams.

In addition to Lee's support of the Foundation Academies, the 2007-08 school year has brought governance changes to the schools. "The principal will not unilaterally make the decisions now," Solis said. Instead, a school improvement team made up of teachers, school administrators, and a district official (Lee) is charged with making all curricular and financial decisions. In addition, Solis explained that whenever Foundation Academies expend federal funds, their requisitions must be approved by the district's executive director for secondary education. "We want to make sure that there's not a stone unturned in ensuring the school's alignment with district goals," Solis explained.

State Assistance

District and school officials generally appreciated state assistance, but wished meetings and funding had started earlier in the school year. Lee said in January that the schools had not yet received their federal funding this year due to a state delay and that this had caused problems. "We've had professional opportunities and plans that we've had to cancel because of lack of funds," she noted.

Solis added that he had been working with the state to get the federal funds released but said he had run into difficulties. "I really believe part of the problem is the department is severely understaffed, and so it makes it very difficult for them to move things in an expeditious fashion." he said. School principals also noted they were waiting for federal funds.

Other assistance from the state through the ISDs is already underway at restructuring schools in Flint. The state's shift from districts contracting with coaches to the ISDs providing leadership coaches has been helpful, Solis said. "Before, it was difficult getting coaches to come in," he explained. "ISDs can better coordinate services to all their high-priority buildings. I think it's a better structure in terms of providing support."

Schools also appreciated leadership coaches. Fred White, principal of Southwestern, said he valued the coach's collaboration in "looking at our data, developing strategies by identifying where our kids fell down on our test scores, where we need to improve, and things that we need to address with direct instruction." The school has monthly professional development meetings to address these data-based findings.

The state's Process Mentor Teams are another source of data analysis and planning for schools, Flint district and school officials said. Although in January the district had not yet received the results of the state audit, Process Mentor Teams were beginning to assist schools. "The main thing that we're focusing on is working with our Process Mentor Team on developing an action goal, looking at the data and information we have right now, and trying to narrow our focus down and become very specific about what we're trying to do," said Central's Principal Hodges.

Marvin Nunn, principal of Northwestern, said he also valued the Process Mentor Team because he believed the meetings would help keep the school on track. "We set strategies that we're going to work on for short-term," he explained, "and the next time the Process Mentor Team comes, they see if there's been any improvement. For instance, we're working on vocabulary across the subject areas for this semester. Teachers will give pre- and post-tests. We are shooting for 80% proficiency."

TURNAROUND SPECIALISTS, RESTAFFING, AND OTHER REFORMS IN WILLOW RUN

Willow Run Community Schools is a suburban district with about 2,200 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 61% of its students are African American, 36% are white, and the rest are Latino, Asian, and other ethnicities. The district faces challenges related to poverty; about 69% of students are from low-income families eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Willow Run Middle School was placed in restructuring in 2003-04. Over the summer of 2004, the district built a new building, restaffed the school, and started a number of curricular reforms. In 2005-06, the middle school hired a turnaround specialist to coordinate these numerous additional reforms at the school. Based on 2006-07 testing, the middle school exited restructuring. In the same year, Willow Run High School entered restructuring. The percentages of Willow Run Middle School and Willow Run High School students scoring at or above proficiency on the 2005-06 and 2006-07 state tests are shown in **table 10**. In spring of 2007, Michigan high schools switched from MEAP to the MME. High school test results between the two years are not comparable; therefore, only 2007 results are shown for the 11th grade.

Exiting Restructuring in the Middle School

Willow Run Middle School has gone through many changes since entering restructuring in 2003-04. The school'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 the small learning communities and Freedom to Learn, a program using laptops, were made possible by the physical structure of the new building, which has four separate classroom

Table 10. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the State Tests in Willow Run Schools, 2005-06 and 2006-07

School	Grade	2005-06 Percentage Proficient in Reading	2005-06 Percentage Proficient in Math	2006-07 Percentage Proficient in Reading	2006-07 Percentage Proficient in Math
Willow Run Middle School	6	59%	36%	66%	51%
	7	60%	37%	69%	64%
	8	68%	47%	70%	45%
Willow Run High School	11	NA	NA	38%	22%

Table reads: In grade 6 at Willow Run Middle School, 2005-06 tests showed that 59% of students were proficient in reading and 36% were proficient in math.

Source: Michigan Department of Education, http://michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168—-,00.html and http://michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_35150_47474—-,00.html

wings and many technological enhancements. The new building also helped make it possible for the district to replace the principal and much of the middle school staff. 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. The new building and new curriculum drew many teachers to apply for and commit to the new reforms, teachers at the school said.

In 2004-05, the school established benchmarks based on state standards and set up benchmark assessments. By 2005-06 teachers developed additional assessments to monitor students every week or two rather than every nine weeks. For 2006-07, the school increased its intervention opportunities for students. The last instructional class of each day in the school's block schedule became Academic Enrichment, a time when students participated in enrichment activities in English language arts or were identified for reteaching. Grade-level teacher teams determined how students were grouped.

In 2006-07, school and district officials worried that too many reforms had been started at the middle school. To remedy the situation, the school hired a turnaround specialist to help coordinate the many new initiatives at the school and to start a new initiative—the balanced leadership team. Because the principal of the middle school had turned over frequently and the current principal was due to retire, this team was essential to carrying the school's reform initiatives forward, district officials said.

Looking back on restructuring efforts at Willow Run Middle School, district and school administrators said staff collaboration was one of the main secrets to the middle school's success. "I think one of the biggest reasons the middle school exited," said Penny Morgan, the district's academic service facilitator, "is that the teachers were working collaboratively with the curriculum, so they were actually taking the curriculum and matching it to the students and creating something that would work for all students."

Now that the middle school has exited restructuring, many of the initiatives will simply stay in place, facilitated by the new building and by the school's staff. For 2007-08, the school was also due to get a one-year continuation of their school improvement grant from MDE, although as of February 2008 the school had not received funding. Morgan said the school plans to use this funding to continue the turnaround specialist and the balanced leadership team.

Even with the grant, however, the school will have to cut back on some initiatives due to general declines in enrollment and revenue. In previous years the school

had early release days once or twice a month, when students went home early or participated in extracurricular activities and academic teachers met for professional development. The school will not be able to continue to have these professional development days, new principal Larry Gray said.

Building on Middle School Success and Using the Process Mentor Team at the High School

While the middle school has been steeped in restructuring for several years, restructuring is just beginning at the high school. One of the first steps the district took was to create a "secondary complex" by joining the administration of the middle school and high school, which are physically connected by a shared indoor swimming pool. While this shift was in part to save the district money, district officials also said the shift made sense academically. "We wanted to make a seamless transition between the middle school and the high school. With one principal over both schools, the principal can oversee the curriculum and make sure that the transition phases are working better for students," Morgan said.

Gray said he planned to draw on the middle school's success as well as the high school staff's expertise. As far as the details of the high school's restructuring plan, in December 2007 he said, "We haven't even jumped into the nuts and bolts." He explained that over the summer and into the fall teachers and the district were engaged in contract negotiations that were particularly contentious around health care. "The most important thing I think right now is to really rebuild relationships and trust," Gray said.

Gray said he expected two groups to help flesh out the high school's restructuring plan: the school advisory committee and the school's Process Mentor Team. As of December the Process Mentor Team had not yet met at the high school. While Gray viewed this delay as a problem, he also viewed it as an opportunity to bring staff together so that they could "get a jump on" restructuring planning before the Process Mentor Team simply told them what to do.

The advisory committee is made up of Gray, at least one Title I teacher, and a cadre of teachers who volunteer to participate. The purpose of the school advisory committee, Gray said, is to "make good decisions about curriculum and instruction and then take that back to the bigger body of staff." He added, "We all believe that we have the talent and the commitment in Willow Run High School to fix the problem. We're really going to try to do that with our school's advisory committee."

While fleshing out the restructuring plan this year, Gray said the school will gather more data about student achievement. First, staff will review all the course exit exams to make sure there is consistency by grade and subject. Second, the school will have 9th and 10th graders take diagnostic exams sponsored by MDE that predict achievement on the MME. "This is tangible, good, clean data," Gray said. "We can use this to really drive instruction."

Conclusion

Michigan has managed to reduce the number of schools in restructuring since the first schools entered this NCLB phase in 2003-04. Numbers would have been even lower in 2007-08 than in 2006-07 had it not been for relatively large numbers of high schools entering restructuring.

Over the years, MDE has taken an increasingly prescriptive role in assisting schools in restructuring. In 2006-07, MDE encouraged schools to use the state strategy of the turnaround specialist and discouraged the "any other" and replacing staff options. In addition in 2006-07, MDE started auditing schools in restructuring. In 2007-08, MDE worked with regional partners such as the ISDs to provide extra assistance and closer monitoring for schools in restructuring. This extra assisting and monitoring consisted of leadership coaches, who spend 100 days assisting principals in schools; the Principals Fellowship, which offers professional development to principals during the summer; and Process Mentor Teams (made up of one state official, one ISD official, and one district official), which review the school improvement process and help the schools set goals. Audits have also continued.

MDE's more prescriptive role, however, encouraged schools to go beyond the federal requirements for restructuring and address the specific challenges at their schools. Information in this report shows that districts and schools responded to this encouragement.

The turnaround specialist remained the most popular choice for schools in restructuring in 2006-07, and many schools found success by implementing multiple restructuring strategies. Furthermore, district and school officials interviewed for this study overwhelmingly reported that no single NCLB strategy used alone was likely to improve their school. Instead, they placed their faith in multiple strategies that were monitored and revised throughout the year. These strategies included several not specified in the federal restructuring options, such as using data to make instructional decisions, increasing teacher collaboration, and sharing decision making at the school rather than relying on the principal alone.

An increase in Title I, Part A funding in Michigan helped make many of these strategies a reality in 2007-08. Despite this increase, officials at the state, district, and school levels all said that there were things they were not able to do to improve schools due to declines in funding at the local level. Since Title I, Part A funding has been flat in past years, state officials are also concerned about maintaining restructuring efforts in the future if Title I, Part A funding flattens out again.

While this study shows that Michigan's strategies are promising for improving student achievement, it also shows that federal strategies and federal dollars alone are not trusted by most educators to pull all schools out of restructuring. Over the years, Michigan's restructuring policies have evolved from a buffet-like list of federal restructuring choices to a full dinner of required targeted assistance and monitoring by the state. Officials responsible for revising federal restructuring policies could learn from Michigan's example of a more closely monitored restructuring policy that is also more directly tailored to schools' needs.

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