A Call to Restructure Restructuring

Lessons from the No Child Left Behind Act in Five States

CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY
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Key Findings and Recommendations

Restructuring is the last stage of school improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This federal sanction seeks to dramatically reform or shut down schools that have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in raising student achievement for five or more consecutive years. A rising number of schools have entered restructuring, and many schools remain stalled in restructuring for multiple years. In California's Grant Union High School District, for example, some schools remained in restructuring for two or more years even though the district and schools had taken all the actions required by federal law. District officials decided to "restructure restructuring," said Rick Carder, formerly the district's director of state and federal programs. "We evaluate what's working and what isn't." As a result, Grant completely changed tactics in one of its schools. Evidence from this study by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) suggests that it is time to take a similar look at restructuring nationally.

This study synthesizes findings from our research on NCLB restructuring in five states with relatively large numbers of schools in restructuring: California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio. These states were chosen because they had well-established accountability systems that allowed them to identify schools for restructuring earlier than many other states. In addition, these states represent a variety of geographic areas. Our research looked at restructuring at the state level. We also conducted in-depth case studies of 19 districts with schools in restructuring in these states and 42 schools within these districts. Individual reports on all five states are available on our Web site (www.cep-dc.org).

This study focuses on restructuring activities in the five states through school year 2007-08. At the time this report was completed, not all of these states had released the total numbers of schools in restructuring for school year 2008-09, so numbers for that school year are not included.

KEY FINDINGS

Our analysis yielded several key findings, listed below, about NCLB restructuring at the national, state, and local levels.

National Finding

- **More schools have entered restructuring, and many remain in that status for multiple years.** According to our analysis of state and federal records, more than 3,500 schools, or about 7% of all Title I[1] schools, were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring in school year 2007-08. This represents an increase of more than 50% from 2006-07, when the U.S. Department of Education (ED) reported that 2,302 schools, or about 4% of all Title I schools, were in restructuring. Furthermore, in the five states we studied, just 19% of the schools that were implementing restructuring made adequate yearly progress based on 2006-07 tests. The vast majority of restructuring schools in the five states studied are in urban districts, and some schools have been in restructuring for as long as four years. The NCLB law does not specify any additional actions for schools that remain in the implementation phase of restructuring for more than one year, and ED has offered little guidance on what to do about persistently struggling schools.

State-Level Findings

- **The so-called "any-other" restructuring option is the most popular of the five options in federal law, but its implementation varies.** Most restructuring schools (86% to 96%) in the five states studied used the any-other option, which allows schools and districts to take any major action, aside from the four more specific options in the NCLB law, that will produce fundamental change in school governance. However, state interpretations of the any-other option varied widely. Michigan and

[1] Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by NCLB provides funds to school districts to educate low-achieving children attending schools in low-income areas.

Ohio, for example, encouraged schools to employ "turnaround" specialists as their interpretation of the any-other option, while Maryland has barred schools entering restructuring after 2006-07 from choosing a turnaround specialist as their restructuring strategy. Implementation at the school level also varied among our 42 case study schools.

- **States have very different methods of distributing funds from the Title I 4% set-aside for school improvement.** Because the amount of funding for this set-aside depends largely on the number of low-income children in the state rather than on the number of Title I schools in improvement, the amount of funding available per school varied widely across the five states studied. Perhaps as a result, states use a range of distribution methods. All five states send a sizeable share of their Title I school improvement funds to districts, often to be distributed to schools, and reserve a small amount for state-level activities. California, Georgia, and Michigan send a portion to regional agencies, which then provide services to schools in improvement. California also gives priority for these funds to schools that have been targeted for state monitoring and to districts that are in corrective action or have large numbers of schools in improvement; thus, not all schools in restructuring may receive set-aside funds. Ohio directs these set-aside funds primarily to districts with the largest numbers and percentages of students that have failed to meet state AYP targets.

- **The five states we studied varied greatly in the supports they offered restructuring schools.** Some of these differences are probably due to the differences in the amount of funding for school improvement and numbers of schools in improvement. The states did not, however, fall into a clear continuum of weak to strong support. Four of the states sponsored extra professional development events to help schools and districts with restructuring and school improvement. In addition, three of these states provided on-site technical assistance to some restructuring schools and gave more intense support and monitoring to schools that have been implementing restructuring plans for multiple years. Two states offered ongoing extra professional development specifically for some principals of restructuring schools. And two states provided on-site leadership coaches or facilitators for schools in restructuring.

- **Results of restructuring varied significantly by state but not by federal restructuring strategy.** Our analysis of five states showed that significantly larger percentages of restructuring schools in Michigan and Georgia made AYP than in other states. Although it was not possible to determine the precise reasons for these variations, they were probably related to differences among states in their content standards, test difficulty, and definitions of "proficient" performance, as well as differences in funding and state policies for restructuring. Still, none of the five federal restructuring options were associated with a greater likelihood of a school making AYP overall or in reading or math alone. In other words, there is no statistical reason to suspect that any one of the federal restructuring options is more effective than another in helping schools make AYP. In addition, none of the staff we interviewed in schools that had exited restructuring could point to a single strategy that they believed was the key to improving student achievement.

District- and School-Level Findings

- **Regardless of which federal restructuring option they had chosen, restructuring schools used some common strategies to raise student achievement.** All 42 case study schools reported using data for instructional decision making. The majority also provided tutoring to struggling students and employed some type of instructional or leadership coach.

- **Replacing staff at restructuring schools sometimes had unintended negative consequences.** Some principals in our case study schools reported being unable to replace staff with qualified teachers. Others spent so much time over the summer hiring staff that they had little time to plan for the new school year and, therefore, got off to a rocky start. Finally, union regulations sometimes compromised successful restaffing. Most case study schools that did successfully replace staff had a large pool of applicants, a plan or vision for the school that allowed it to overcome its past reputation as a "failing school," help from the teachers' union to resolve stumbling blocks in the contract, and effective hiring systems that did not rely on principals alone to recruit and interview applicants. The experience of some case study schools in Maryland also suggests that the downsides of staff replacement dissipate over time.

- **Case study schools that missed AYP targets due to the performance of specific student subgroups rather than to overall performance still directed considerable resources to all students.** Our case study schools that missed AYP targets solely because of subgroup performance typically provided special programs to help raise achievement for students in traditionally underserved subgroups. But their focus on subgroups has been less intense than might be expected, given the attention NCLB places on subgroups. All case study schools that missed targets due to subgroups still had initiatives to raise achievement for all students and devoted considerable resources toward this end.

- **Principals and teachers at case study schools that have raised student achievement enough to exit restructuring remained concerned about maintaining progress.** At least one staff member in each case study school expressed concern about maintaining achievement gains and continuing to make AYP, particularly since state AYP targets will keep rising until they reach NCLB's ultimate goal of 100% of students scoring at the proficient level on state tests by 2014. Maintaining student achievement in schools that have exited restructuring is also difficult because these schools often lose some of their resources, including special funding for school improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CEP makes the following recommendations for refining the restructuring process for low-performing schools:

- **Policymakers should expand the federal options for restructuring and encourage states to create state-specific strategies.** Since no single option appears to be more effective than another, more federal options rather than fewer would be optimal at this point. In defining broad federal options, policymakers should consider strategies that have been cited as effective in school improvement research, including this study, such as using data to identify areas of student weaknesses and providing tutoring for struggling students. States should then take responsibility for creating state-specific options for restructuring and should require schools to choose multiple, coordinated restructuring strategies. These strategies might vary by state. For example, whether a state requires the district or school to employ some type of coach or turnaround specialist should depend in part on whether there are enough qualified people in the state to fill the position.

- **States need to step up efforts to monitor restructuring implementation.** This monitoring is essential both to ensure that schools actually implement the actions in their restructuring plan and to learn more about what works in restructuring and what doesn't. Some of this monitoring might be done through regional educational agencies or outside evaluation organizations. States might learn more about how to monitor restructuring from the experiences of Georgia, Michigan, and Maryland.

- **Federal and state officials need to consider policies to address schools that remain in restructuring.** Because implementing school reform initiatives takes more than one year, these policies should not require schools to make changes every year, but instead should require monitoring schools' implementation of their restructuring plans, giving promising strategies time to work, and changing course when strategies are clearly ineffective. Policymakers could learn from Michigan and Georgia's efforts to address the needs of schools that remain in restructuring for multiple years.

- **Unless certain criteria are met, restructuring schools should not choose to replace staff, and states should not recommend this option.** Criteria could include assurances that 1) districts have the capacity to help the school advertise and interview for open staff positions; 2) the region around the school has enough qualified candidates who might apply for open positions; and 3) the district, perhaps with state assistance, can negotiate with the teachers' union to remove potential obstacles to restaffing.

- **States and districts should work to help maintain student achievement in schools that exit restructuring.** When schools that exit restructuring prematurely lose the supports that helped them succeed, this could create a revolving door of schools that improve, only to fail again. States and districts should help schools adequately plan to replace these funds and services and should continue to funnel funds and services to these schools until they are able to maintain achievement.

Study Methods and Background

The primary research for this study was conducted from the summer of 2007 through the summer of 2008 by four CEP consultants: Caitlin Scott, Brenda Neuman-Sheldon, Maureen Kelleher, and Elizabeth Duffrin. Five states—California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio—participated in the study, as did 19 districts and 42 schools within those five states. **Table 1** lists the participating districts and schools.

Our research is based largely on interviews with state department of education officials and with district and school staff in all five states. In these interviews, individuals reflected on the results of restructuring from 2006-07 and the restructuring initiatives carried out during 2007-08. We also analyzed restructuring documents and data from the state, district, and school levels in the five states.

This study is also informed by the individual reports CEP has issued on restructuring in the five states over multiple years. These include three reports on California (CEP, 2006a; 2007a; 2008a), three on Maryland (CEP 2006b; 2007c; 2008e), four on Michigan (CEP, 2004; 2005; 2007b; 2008b), and one each on Ohio (2008d) and Georgia (2008c).

CEP chose to study restructuring in these five states because they had already begun implementing test-based accountability systems and calculating AYP under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, the federal law that preceded NCLB. As a result, these 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.

Districts participating in CEP's restructuring studies were chosen with guidance from their state departments of education. In the initial year of each state study, we asked the state department of education to provide a list of districts that were implementing restructuring strategies as intended by the state. We then invited districts to participate that represented both the variety of communities served by restructuring schools across the state and the diversity of approaches being used to restructure schools. In districts with more than one school in restructuring, local district personnel chose the schools to participate in this study.

Table 1. States, Districts, and Schools Participating in CEP's Restructuring Studies, 2007-08

State	District	District Type	School	Years in NCLB Improvement
California				
	Grant Joint Union	Suburban	Martin Luther King Junior High	7
			Grant Union High School	6
	Oakland Unified	Urban	Cox Charter Elementary	7
			New Highland Elementary	7
			Sobrante Park Elementary	0*
			Whittier/Greenleaf Elementary	7
	Palmdale Union	Suburban	Palm Tree Elementary	0*
			Yucca Elementary	7
	Tahoe Truckee Unified	Rural	North Tahoe Middle	6
Georgia				
	Atlanta Public Schools	Urban	Long Middle	5
			Kennedy Middle	7
	Muscogee County School District	Urban	Baker Middle	8
			Eddy Middle	8
	Stewart County School District	Rural	Stewart-Quitman High School	8

continued...

Table 1. States, Districts, and Schools Participating in CEP's Restructuring Studies, 2007-08 (cont.)

State	District	District Type	School	Years in NCLB Improvement
Maryland				
	Anne Arundel County Public Schools	Suburban	Annapolis High School	4
	Baltimore City Public Schools	Urban	Guilford Elementary/Middle	8
			Mary E. Rodman Elementary	8
			Morrell Park Elementary/Middle	6
			Thurgood Marshall High School	7
	Baltimore County Public Schools	Suburban	Woodlawn Middle	5
	Prince George's County Public Schools	Suburban	Arrowhead Elementary	5
			Bladensburg Elementary	0*
			Charles Carroll Middle	8
			G. Gardner Shugart Middle	8
Michigan				
	Detroit Public Schools	Urban	William Beckham Elementary Academy	5
			Cerveny Middle	6
			Cleveland Intermediate/High School	7
	Flint Community Schools	Urban	Central Foundations Academy (7-8)	6
			Northwestern Foundations Academy (7-8)	6
			Southwestern Foundations Academy (7-8)	6
	Harrison Community Schools	Rural	Hillside Elementary	0*
	Willow Run Community Schools	Suburban	Willow Run Middle	0*
			Willow Run High School	4
Ohio				
	Cleveland Metropolitan School District	Urban	East High School	4
			East Technical High School	4
			Marshall High School	4
	Cincinnati Public Schools	Urban	John P. Parker Elementary (K-8)	7
			Reese E. Price Elementary (K-8)	6
			Taft Elementary (K-8)	8
	Mansfield City Schools	Urban	Newman Elementary	4
			Malabar Middle School (7-8)	4
	Mount Vernon City Schools	Rural	Mount Vernon Middle	4

Table reads: In California, the suburban district of Grant Joint Union participated in CEP's study of restructuring, as did two of its schools: Martin Luther King Junior High (in year 7 of NCLB improvement) and Grant Union High School (in year 6 of improvement).

*Schools in "year 0" had been in restructuring but had exited school improvement prior to school year 2007-08.

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e.

Identification of Schools in Restructuring and Federal Sanctions

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all states to test virtually all students annually in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8, plus once during high school. It also requires all schools and districts to meet targets for adequate yearly progress that place them on track for ensuring that 100% of students will be academically proficient by 2014. States, however, are allowed to set their own yearly testing targets with approval from ED. As a result, states currently have different requirements for the percentages of students who must score at the proficient level or above on these tests for a school to make AYP.

Table 2 shows the state percentage proficient targets for 2006-07 testing in the five states studied. Not only do the targets vary by state, but the tests themselves are different in their content, difficulty, format, and scoring scales. In addition, the standards outlining the content students are expected to learn in each state are different. For these reasons, one cannot assume that schools in a state like California, which had the lowest AYP target for 2006-07 testing, had an easier time meeting the California target than schools in states with higher targets, as discussed below.

Table 2. Percentage of Students That Had to Score At or Above the Proficient Level on 2006-07 State Tests for CA, GA, MD, MI, and OH Schools to Make AYP

State	Level	Reading	Math
California			
	Elementary/Middle	24.4%	26.5%
	High School	22.3%	20.9%
Georgia			
	Elementary/Middle	66.7%	58.3%
	High School	84.7%	68.6%
Maryland			
	Elementary (K-5)	67.2%	63.9%
	Elementary (K-8)	66.7%	57.0%
	Middle	66.3%	50.0%
	High School	52.2%	38.6%
Michigan*			
	Elementary	48%	56%
	Middle	43%	43%
	High School	52%	44%
Ohio			
	Grade 3	71.2%	60.6%
	Grade 4	68.3%	67.1%
	Grade 5	63.8%	49.6%
	Grade 6	75.8%	55.1%
	Grade 7	68.6%	47.3%
	Grade 8	73.8%	47.5%
	Grade 10	71.8%	60.0%

Table reads: On the state tests administered in school year 2006-07 in California, 24.4% of students at the elementary and middle school levels had to score at or above the proficient level to make AYP in reading. In math, the required percentage proficient was 26.5%.

*In Michigan, the state target for the percentage proficient varies based on a system that weights these percentages by grade level. The overall state grade span targets, shown in this table, give a rough idea of targets for schools in general.

Sources: California Department of Education, 2006; Georgia Department of Education, 2007b; Maryland Department of Education, 2008; Michigan Department of Education, 2007; Ohio Department of Education, 2008.

In addition to meeting the percentage proficient targets, schools must also meet other targets to make AYP in these states, including a 95% testing participation target and state-determined attendance and graduation rate targets.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides federal aid to school districts to educate low-achieving children in low-income schools. Under the amendments made to Title I by NCLB, schools and districts that receive Title I funds and have not made AYP for two consecutive years are identified for improvement and 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 improvement). After six consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must implement their restructuring plans (year 5 of improvement). To exit restructuring, a school must make AYP for two consecutive years. Neither the NCLB statute nor the U.S. Department of Education regulations offer guidance for what happens to schools beyond year 5 of improvement (the first year of restructuring implementation).

While states are not required to identify non-Title I schools for NCLB improvement or to enforce sanctions for non-Title I schools, some choose to do so. Of the five states in our study, four—Georgia, Ohio, Maryland, and Michigan—identify both Title I and non-Title I schools for improvement under NCLB. Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio also require non-Title I schools to implement restructuring, but Michigan does not. California neither determines the improvement status of nor applies sanctions to non-Title I schools.

Numbers of Schools in Restructuring

Due to differences in state accountability systems in 2002, when NCLB was signed into law, states had schools reach the restructuring stage at different times. States with well-established accountability systems, such as the five states in our study, identified schools for restructuring earlier than other states. In a few states—Nebraska, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Wyoming—no school had reached the restructuring phase of NCLB sanctions by 2007-08 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008; New Hampshire Department of Education, 2007).

In the 2006-07 school year, 2,302 Title I schools, or about 4% of all Title I schools in the nation, were in restructuring planning or implementation, according to an ED report called *Mapping America's Educational Progress* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). CEP estimates that in 2007-08, the number increased by 56% to 3,599 Title I schools, or about 7% of all Title I schools in the nation. This estimate is based on numbers from the *Mapping* report, CEP's studies of restructuring schools in five states, and state Web sites for the eight states with data missing from the *Mapping* report. Because many states periodically revise their numbers of restructuring schools based on data reviews and appeals, school closures, and changes in Title I status, the exact number of schools in restructuring changes slightly throughout the school year. For example, in three of the five states CEP studied, the numbers that the state reported to CEP differed slightly from the numbers reported in the *Mapping* study, probably due to state revisions. Therefore, the number of schools in restructuring reported in this study is our best estimate of the actual numbers.

Table 3 shows the numbers of schools in restructuring for the 20 states in the country with the most schools in restructuring, including the five states in this study. These states may have large numbers of schools in restructuring for reasons that may have nothing to do with student achievement. First, as mentioned previously, these states had accountability systems in place earlier than other states. Second, several of these states simply have large populations and many schools—most notably, California, which has the largest number of schools in the nation.

Federal law does not require states to track or report the numbers of schools that remain in the implementation phase of restructuring after multiple years (those in year 5 of NCLB improvement or beyond). Among the states we studied, California choose not to officially report the number of schools in year 6 of improvement or beyond, but rather just grouped these schools with those in year 5. The rest of the states in our study do report these numbers. **Table 4** shows the numbers of schools by years of restructuring—year 4 of improvement or above—in the states we studied. We estimated California's numbers based on historical lists of schools in improvement on the state Web site. National numbers for schools in the later years of restructuring are not readily available.

Table 3. Numbers of Title I Schools in Restructuring Planning or Implementation in 2007-08 in the 20 States with the Most Restructuring Schools

State	Estimated Number of Schools in Restructuring Planning or Implementation	Source
California	1,013	CEP, 2008a; U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Florida	462	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Illinois	333	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
New York	256	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Pennsylvania	142	Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008
Massachusetts	135	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
New Jersey	101	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Ohio	97	CEP, 2008d
South Carolina	86	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
New Mexico	84	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Georgia	65	CEP, 2008c; U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Michigan	63	CEP 2008b
Connecticut	60	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Alaska	55	Alaska Department of Education, 2007
Hawaii	55	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Arkansas	53	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Maryland	52	CEP, 2008e
North Carolina	49	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Arizona	45	U.S. Department of Education, 2008
Kentucky	45	U.S. Department of Education, 2008

Table reads: In 2007-08, California had 1,013 schools in restructuring, according to studies by the Center on Education Policy (2008a) and the U.S. Department of Education (2008).

Table 4. Title I Schools in Restructuring and Beyond in Five States, 2007-08

State	Numbers of Schools by Year of NCLB Improvement				
	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
California	416	278	122	187	10
Georgia	19	13	14	9	10
Maryland	11	1	6	14	20
Michigan	34	9	10	9	1
Ohio	62	11	15	6	3

Table reads: In 2007-08, California had 416 Title I schools in year 4 of school improvement (restructuring planning), 278 schools in year 5 of improvement (the first year of restructuring implementation), 122 schools in year 6, 187 schools in year 7, and 10 schools in year 8.

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e.

Previous CEP studies have shown that nationally, schools in urban areas are overrepresented among those identified for NCLB improvement (CEP, 2006d). Similarly, in the five states in this study, schools in urban districts make up the largest percentage of those identified for restructuring. **Figure 1** shows these percentages by state.

Figure 1. Percentages of Title I Schools in Restructuring in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Districts in Five States, 2007-08

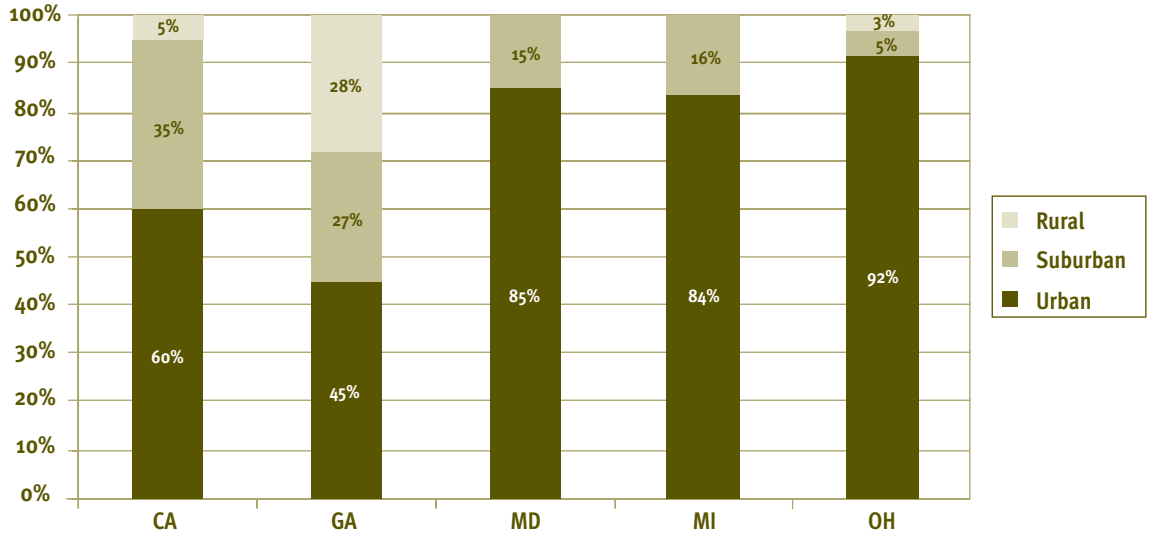

Figure reads: In 2007-08 60% of the schools in restructuring in California were in urban areas, 35% were in suburban areas, and 5% were in rural areas.

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e; and National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2005-06.

Restructuring Choices

Schools and districts identified for restructuring must choose from a menu of options designed to restructure the school. The federal law spells out five options for restructuring, listed in **table 5.** As the table shows, most restructuring schools in California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio have chosen the "any-other" option, which allows schools and districts to undertake any major action, aside from the four other options specified in the law, that will produce fundamental change in the school's governance structure. None of these five states allows districts to turn schools over to the state. State officials in California, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio said that the state does not have the capacity to run these restructuring schools. In Georgia, this option is not permitted under state law, which requires each school district to remain under the autonomous control of a local board of education.

In addition, only a handful of schools in these states have chosen to restructure by reopening as a charter school. A few restructuring schools in Michigan and about 8% of the schools in Ohio were already charter schools when they entered restructuring, so for these existing charter schools, reopening as a charter would not represent a major reform in school governance.

While table 5 shows uniformity in the popularity of schools' choices, the states in our study interpreted these options differently. Federal guidance discourages minor reform efforts but leaves much of the details of decision making and implementation to districts and schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). States in our study varied the most on their interpretation of the any-other option.

As described in **table 6,** Maryland and Michigan have provided specific examples of what is allowable under the any-other option. Maryland goes so far as to say that schools cannot choose the federal any-other option without also declaring which of the state-specific strategies under this option they will use. Michigan still allows for an undefined any-other choice. Ohio asks schools choosing the any-other option to describe in their own words the actions they took. Ohio officials then group these self-descriptions into categories. Schools are not placed into more than one self-reported category. California and Georgia (not shown in table 6) track only the options in the federal law. Georgia, however, expects schools choosing the any-other option to follow a state-determined set of school improvement initiatives.

The NCLB law does not require state departments of education to ensure that all schools are actually implementing

Table 5. Percentages of Schools in Restructuring Implementation in Five States Choosing Various Options in 2006-07

Federal Restructuring Option	CA	GA	MD*	MI	OH*
Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform	90%	94%	86%	96%	93%
Replacing all or most of the staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	13%	4%	12%	7%	4%
Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school	10%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Reopening the school as a charter school	1%	0%	1%	0%	2%
Turning the school over to the state, if the state agrees	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: In 2006-07, 90% of California's schools in restructuring implementation chose the federal option of undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform.

*Percentages in Maryland and Ohio include non-Title I schools as well as Title I schools; these states require both types of schools to implement restructuring.

Note: Columns do not total 100% because some schools chose more than one restructuring option.

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e.

Table 6. State-Specific Restructuring Strategies under the Federal Any-Other Option, 2006-07

State and Options	Percentage of Restructuring Schools Choosing the Strategy*
Maryland	
Appoint a school turnaround specialist	64%
Use the Blueprint for High School Reform and Derivative High School model	14%
Have the district central office take over the principalship of the school	3%
Appoint a distinguished principal	3%
Replicate the governance model of a charter school using a governing board	1%
Use an external reform model	0%
Close the school and reopen it as a complete school of choice within district governance	0%
Michigan	
Appoint/employ an independent turnaround specialist	87%
Use an external research-based reform model	9%
Implement any other change in school governance (aside from those listed in this table)	7%
Appoint a new principal	2%
Turn operation over to the school's School Improvement Committee/Team	0%
Restructure the governance of the school by appointing a governing board	0%
Close the school and reopen it as a complete school of choice within district governance	0%
Suspend the office of the principal; indicate how the school will be governed	0%
Ohio	
Change school governance	25%
Implement any other major change in school governance (aside from those listed in this table)	20%
Reconfigure school(s) in grade span, size, etc.	16%
Bring in outside experts	11%
Redesign curriculum	9%
Establish redesign committee	9%
Close the school	4%
Increase district oversight of the school	0%

Table reads: In Maryland, 64% of restructuring schools chose to appoint a school turnaround specialist as their state-specific restructuring strategy under the federal any-other option.

*Percentages do not total the percentages of schools using the any-other option reported in table 5 because some schools chose more than one state-specific restructuring strategy or because of rounding.

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e.

their restructuring strategies. In a national sample, the Government Accountability Office (2007) found that 40% of restructuring schools did not report that they were implementing any of the federal restructuring options. In our research in these five states, virtually all schools did report a restructuring choice to their state, although in states with more defined strategies under the any-other option, schools reported the state-defined option.

In a similar vein, state departments of education do not have to ensure that schools implement a new strategy every year they remain in restructuring. Some of the federal strategies do not lend themselves to multiple years of implementation. For example, two of the federal strategies—replacing staff and becoming a charter—cannot be implemented easily two years in a row. If a school becomes a charter but keeps its restructuring status, does it need to implement a different strategy the next year it is in restructuring? Or was the initial strategy of becoming a charter enough? Other strategies, such as using the any-other option or hiring an outside contractor can easily be continued over multiple years. The law is silent on this point.

In California, Michigan, and Maryland, where we have followed schools for multiple years, our case studies schools typically continued the same restructuring strategies when they remained in restructuring implementation for more than one year. In most instances, district and school officials said they continued the strategies because their schools had increased student achievement but not enough to exit restructuring. State officials in these three states endorsed this interpretation of NCLB.

For example, schools in the Palmdale Elementary School District in California are intentionally continuing and building on restructuring efforts begun several years ago through the any-other option, according to Betty Stiers, assistant superintendent of educational services. In the past, she said, the district made the mistake of not giving reforms enough time. "When we didn't see results right away, we embraced the next big thing." Now district and school officials realize that "change occurs over time," she said. A recent national research synthesis from the National Implementation Research Network supports the idea that reforms typically take at least three to five years to implement fully (Fixsen et al., 2005).

While continuing reforms could be seen as letting a school off the hook for serious change, staff at Grant Union High in California, one of our case study schools, noted that continuing and improving an initiative can be as arduous as starting something new. Rather than instituting new improvement efforts for 2007-08, Grant Union High had elected to deepen and intensify its efforts. "Look, this isn't glamorous; this isn't like the flavor of the month," said Principal Craig Murray. "We're talking hard work. It's kind of a grind, but hey, this is what the kids need to learn."

In a few instances, however, schools in our case study were continuing the same restructuring strategies despite little or no improvement in the percentage of students scoring proficient on state tests. In these schools, officials were uncertain why the strategies did not appear to be working and wanted to give their efforts more time, especially when their strategies within the any-other category had been shown to be effective in other schools.

In interviews, state officials described how they influenced district and school choices. Our reviews of state documents typically supported these descriptions. The states in our study varied radically in the advice and limitations they gave districts and schools about choosing strategies. Important contradictions include the following:

- Michigan and Ohio encouraged schools to employ turnaround specialists, while Maryland has barred schools entering restructuring after 2006-07 from choosing a turnaround specialist as their restructuring strategy.

- Georgia state officials favored the any-other federal option as a way of implementing state strategies for improvement, while Michigan discouraged the any-other option in favor of state-defined options.

- California stood alone in refraining from trying to constrain, modify, or further define school's restructuring choices.

The variety in state approaches appears to be related to differences in state context as well as differences in the philosophies of state departments of education. For example, Michigan and Ohio have both received positive reports from schools about turnaround specialists, while Maryland schools often reported that their turnaround specialists were stretched too thinly to be helpful. Georgia always strictly defined the any-other option, while Michigan initially allowed more leeway but then became concerned that the any-other option was ineffective. State rationales for advocating and discouraging certain restructuring strategies are described in more detail in **box 1**.

Box 1. State Approaches to Restructuring Options

The California Department of Education has chosen not to limit or direct schools' restructuring choices and does not advocate one restructuring option over another. State officials do not believe a single strategy will help all schools. "I wish there was a one-size-fits-all solution, but there isn't," said State Superintendent Jack O'Connell in a speech at a professional development event in 2007. Instead, the state provides technical assistance, such as professional development and online tools, to help districts and schools make good choices about restructuring. California does have a separate, more prescriptive program for improving schools called School Assistance and Intervention Teams (SAIT). Schools are identified for SAIT based on their ratings under the state accountability system, which differs from the system used for NCLB. There is some overlap among SAIT schools and schools in restructuring, but there is far from a one-to-one correspondence. Some restructuring schools get more state interventions through SAIT, but some do not.

The Georgia Department of Education sees the federal any-other option as an opportunity to carry out the statewide mandate to improve curriculum and instruction, said Wanda Creel, who was associate superintendent for school improvement services in the Georgia Department of Education at the time of this study. The state sees its own reform initiative as the main vehicle for improvement under NCLB. Creel said her department discourages most districts from replacing principals "unless the leader is really someone who does not have the capacity to learn." A shortage of skilled principal candidates, especially ones with the experience to turn around a failing school, makes it preferable to focus on mentoring an ineffective leader, she explained. Replacing all or most of the school staff is also considered untenable in locations with teacher shortages.

The Maryland Department of Education initially outlined six restructuring options for schools under the any-other federal option, including employing a turnaround specialist. But, for schools entering restructuring implementation in school year 2006-07 and beyond, the state eliminated all of the state strategies under the federal any-other option except the option of appointing a distinguished principal or becoming a University Partnership School in Baltimore City, an option added in 2007-08. According to Ann Chafin, assistant superintendent for student, family and school support at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the state based this decision on evidence from the field. "We didn't see evidence that the turnaround specialist option worked. The other options were removed because they simply were not being selected," Chafin said. However, schools that had previously selected one of the former state restructuring strategies were not required to change. For example, schools that had elected to use a turnaround specialist as an element of their restructuring plan before 2006-07 were permitted to continue their existing plans. Therefore, most schools in Maryland were still using turnaround specialists in 2007-08 despite the state's lack of support for this option.

The Michigan Department of Education has a needs assessment that is based on its school improvement framework and is designed to help districts and schools make good choices about restructuring. Michigan has also strongly encouraged some schools to make particular restructuring choices and has sometimes held back a school's school improvement funds until the school's restructuring plan satisfied state officials. For example, in 2006-07, Michigan required some districts, including Detroit, to choose turnaround specialists, according to Betty Underwood, interim director of the state's Office of School Improvement. For 2007-08, no district was actually required to have a turnaround specialist, although the state "strongly suggested employing a coach or turnaround specialist," Underwood said. Michigan has also discouraged districts from using the any-other state option because it is relatively vague and the state would like to have more information about what schools are doing.

The Ohio Department of Education has focused most of its energy on assisting districts in the corrective action phase of NCLB sanctions (year 3 of improvement) and districts with multiple schools in school improvement. Some of these districts have schools in restructuring, and some do not. For schools in restructuring, Ohio initially wanted to require restructuring schools to work with an external coach or a turnaround specialist. However, "when we started looking at the quality of external people going in, we had to revisit that," explained Stephen Barr, associate superintendent for Ohio's Center for School Improvement. Ohio still encourages restructuring schools to work with an external coach and is trying to develop a quality-control system to help build a pool of coaches as a resource for the state's most challenged schools. In addition, Barr said, the state is trying to flesh out what the any-other option might look like by helping districts diagnose school problems and develop school improvement plans to address them. Ohio has used its statewide school improvement funds to create state diagnostic teams. These diagnostic teams were piloted in 2006-07 in two high-need districts: Columbus, which had 17 schools in restructuring during school year 2007-08, and Mansfield, which had 2 schools in restructuring planning. Although the teams observe schools and classrooms, their efforts are also focused on determining which district-level supports for schools in improvement are working and which are not.

Restructuring Results

Tracking the impact of restructuring on student achievement is difficult. First, states do not have to ensure that all restructuring schools are actually implementing their restructuring plans, so data are not available about the quality or intensity of implementation. Second, state content standards and tests vary greatly, so test results should not be compared across states. Therefore, to examine the achievement effects of the federal restructuring options we looked at whether schools implementing particular options made adequate yearly progress. Although AYP is an acceptable outcome measure for this analysis, the likelihood of restructuring schools making AYP would be expected to vary across states due to the aforementioned differences in state standards and tests and other factors. We have therefore analyzed AYP data for each of the five states studied, as well as across all five states combined, to determine whether the effects of restructuring are different in individual states. It is important to note that this study analyzed the results of restructuring across only one year, which is too short a time to discern whether changes in student achievement constitute an actual trend. Future studies will attempt to extend the analysis over multiple years.

First, we used a statistical technique called logistic regression to explore three issues across all five states:

1. Whether the likelihood of a school making AYP was associated with one or more of the federal restructuring options
2. Whether the likelihood of a school making AYP in English language arts (ELA) was associated with one or more of the federal restructuring options
3. Whether the likelihood of a school making AYP in math was associated with one or more of the federal restructuring options

In all three of these analyses, the options of becoming a charter school or turning the school over to the state were omitted because too few schools chose these options to draw any valid conclusions.

Our analysis showed that none of the three remaining federal options—replacing staff, contracting with an outside organization, or implementing the any-other option—was associated with a greater likelihood of a restructuring school making AYP overall or in English language arts or math alone. In other words, there is no statistical reason to suspect that any one of these three options is more effective than another in helping schools make AYP.

Next, we used statistical tests called Chi squares to examine whether restructuring schools were more or less likely to make AYP based on the state in which they were located. As expected, there were significant differences. As shown in **table 7,** larger percentages of restructuring schools in Michigan and Georgia made AYP than in other states.

Table 7. Percentages and Numbers of Schools Implementing Restructuring That Made AYP Based on 2006-07 Testing

Area(s) in Which School Made AYP[1]	State				
	CA (N = 352)	GA (N = 49)	MD (N = 69)	MI (N = 46)	OH (N = 56)
Overall	14% (48)	47% (23)	12% (8)	48% (22)	9% (5)
In Math	46% (162)	53% (26)	35% (24)	78% (36)	34% (19)
In ELA	17% (59)	71% (35)	22% (15)	78% (36)	11% (6)

Table reads: Based on 2006-07 testing, 14% of California's restructuring schools, or 48 schools, made AYP.

[1] The analysis used Chi square (x^2) to compare schools making AYP across states. Differences were statistically significant overall (x^2 (4, N = 572) = 63.55, p = 0.001), in math (x^2 (4, N = 572) = 26.88, p = 0.001), and in ELA (x^2 (4, N = 572) = 139.50, p = 0.001).

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e.

Since state context appeared to be an important factor in making AYP, we examined the effects of restructuring strategies in each state separately. We used logistic regressions to explore whether particular restructuring strategies were associated with making AYP overall, in ELA, and in math in any individual state. They were not, although in some states the number of schools using an outside contractor or replacing staff was too small to be tested.[2]

Several possible reasons may account for differences in the percentage of restructuring schools making AYP by state. First, state percentage proficient targets for making AYP do vary considerably by state. As shown earlier in table 2, Ohio's targets are among the highest of the five states studied, but Michigan and Georgia's targets are not the lowest. So, state test targets may be somewhat but not entirely responsible for these differences among states.

Second, variations in state tests may also affect whether schools do or do not make AYP. Recent studies have highlighted these variations. One such study by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2007) mapped states' 2004-05 cut scores for proficient performance on their state tests onto the 2005 scoring scales of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Some of the NCES findings supported our findings. For example, the NCES study did indicate that California's cut score for 8th-grade reading mapped relatively high on the NAEP scale—the fifth highest among the 34 states for which data were available. This higher ranking indicates that it may be more difficult for students to meet cut scores in California than in some other states and, thus, schools might be less likely to make AYP. However, many comparisons among states that would inform our study could not be made because since 2004-05, Georgia and Michigan have changed their math and readings tests, Ohio has changed its 4th grade math test (CEP, 2008d), and California was not included in the NCES analysis for 8th grade math. This examination of the NCES findings showed that differences in the difficulty of passing state tests may have some relationship with the ease of making AYP by state but does not explain all of the state variation we found.

Variations in state funding and supports for schools in restructuring, discussed later in this report, might also help explain state differences in the percentages of restructuring schools making AYP. However, we found no way to model these two factors mathematically.

Finally, all these factors may interact to affect the likelihood of restructuring schools meeting AYP targets. For example, in states with fewer schools in restructuring, funding may be concentrated in these needy schools and support may be stronger. Other types of interactions are also possible.

Funding for Schools in Restructuring

Several factors influence the amount of federal funding to assist schools identified for NCLB improvement, including restructuring schools. At the broadest level, funding for restructuring schools is shaped by the total amount appropriated for the federal Title I program. As shown in **table 8,** annual appropriations for Title I, Part A increased substantially for the first few years after NCLB was enacted in 2002, and then gradually leveled off. Appropriations for fiscal year 2008 (which school districts receive for school year 2008-09) represent a notable increase over the previous year.

Funding for schools in improvement is also affected by fluctuations in Title I allocations to specific states and school districts that result from annual changes in their estimated census counts of low-income children. These fluctuations can occur regardless of whether the national appropriation has gone up or down, and they affect all Title I schools, including those in restructuring.

Several of our case study interviewees noted that since 2004 funding has not kept pace with inflation and rising health care costs in their state. In some cases, this situation may be attributable to the leveling off of appropriations and in other cases it may be the result of annual volatility in census counts of poor children.[3] Whether states, districts, and school must use their own funds to implement the school improvement stipulations in NCLB and

[2] The numbers of schools replacing staff in Georgia, Michigan, and Ohio were too small to be tested. The numbers of schools contracting with outside providers were too small to be tested in Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio.

[3] For a fuller discussion of the reasons for volatility in Title I allocations to individual states and districts, see two CEP reports on Title I funding (CEP, 2007d; and 2008h), available at www.cep-dc.org.

Table 8. Federal Appropriations for Title I, Part A, 2002 to 2008

Fiscal Year	Appropriation	Percentage Increase Over Previous Year
2002	$10,350,000,000	17.8%
2003	$11,688,664,000	12.9%
2004	$12,342,309,000	5.6%
2005	$12,739,571,000	3.2%
2006	$12,713,125,000	-0.2%
2007	$12,838,125,000	1.0%
2008	$13,898,875,000	8.3%

Table reads: In fiscal year 2002, the national appropriation for Title I, Part A totaled $10,350,000,000, which represents a 17.8% increase from the previous year.

Source: U.S. Department of Education website, www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/funding.html.

whether NCLB is an "unfunded" mandate continue to be matters of debate and lawsuits (Walsh, 2008).

A major source of funding for restructuring schools is the so-called school improvement set-aside under Title I. Beginning in 2004, each state was required by federal law to set aside 4% of its total Title I allocation to assist districts and schools in improvement, including schools in restructuring. However, some states, including California and Georgia, did not receive sufficient increases in Title I allocations to reserve the full 4% because of a "hold-harmless" provision in NCLB, which prevents districts from losing funds compared with the previous year as a result of the set-aside.[4] Consequently, some states have had flat or declining Title I set-aside funds to assist schools in improvement. **Table 9** shows the amount of the set-aside for the states in our study.

The problems created by insufficient funding for the set-aside will diminish in the future because, beginning in fiscal year 2007, Congress has provided a separate appropriation specifically for school improvement under a different section of Title I. This appropriation supplements the funding available through the 4% set-aside. For example, California received about $16 million in new federal funds for school improvement in December 2007, which the state began to award to districts in late spring of 2008 after a competitive grant process.

Because the set-aside is dependent on child poverty counts rather than on the number of Title I schools in improvement, the amount of available funding per restructuring school varies widely in these five states. In addition, these funds can be used to assist all schools in improvement, not just those in restructuring. Perhaps as a result, states have taken a range of approaches to distributing these funds. 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. The schools in our study varied a great deal in how they used their school improvement funds. By law, states must allocate 95% of the set-aside to "local educational agencies," which include school districts and regional assistance centers. These entities can then pass the funds to schools or provide schools with services. The remaining 5% can go to state activities.

All five states send a portion of their Title I school improvement funds to districts to be distributed to schools and reserve a small amount for state-level activ-

[4] For a fuller discussion of issues related to Title funding for school improvement, see CEP 2006c; 2007d; and 2008h.

Table 9. Title I Set-Aside Funding for School Improvement

State	Approximate Funds for 4% Set-Aside, 2006-07	Approximate Funds for 4% Set-Aside, 2007-08
California	$69 million	$33 million
Georgia	$16 million	$17 million
Maryland	$7 million	$7 million
Michigan	$15 million	$17 million
Ohio	$6 million	$19 million

Table reads: In California approximately $69 million was available under the Title I 4% set-aside for 2006-07 to help schools identified for improvement, including schools in restructuring. The set-aside amount decreased to about $33 million for 2007-08.

Sources: CEP, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e.

ities. California, Georgia, and Michigan send a portion to regional agencies, which then provide services to schools in improvement. In Maryland these funds go to schools in the later stages of improvement. In California, not all schools in restructuring may receive set-aside funds because priority for these funds goes to schools that are in state monitoring and to districts that are in corrective action or have large numbers of schools in improvement. Similarly, since 2006 Ohio has targeted school improvement funds to districts with the greatest numbers and percentages of students that have failed to meet AYP targets, regardless of how many schools in the district are in improvement or how long these schools have been in improvement. Maryland and Georgia supplement the federal set-aside for school improvement with state funds. More detail about how states spent funds is provided in **box 2**.

Box 2. State Uses of the Title I Set-Aside for School Improvement

In California, the 4% set-aside supported school improvement activities in 2007-08 that were similar to those supported in previous years. While funds were not specifically targeted toward schools in restructuring, some restructuring schools did see indirect funding increases because they had also been identified for state monitoring under the state accountability system or because their districts had been identified for improvement or had large numbers of schools in improvement. In addition, all restructuring schools could benefit from funding directed at providers of technical support for schools in improvement.

In 2007-08, **Georgia** set aside $11.2 million in state funds and $16.5 million in federal Title I school improvement funds, a total of almost $28 million, to support 323 schools that had been identified for NCLB improvement. The majority of federal funding was distributed to the 187 Title I schools in improvement, which were targeted for monitoring under the statewide accountability system. Of these schools, 65 were in restructuring planning or implementation. Most state funding was used by the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) to hire school improvement specialists and leadership facilitators to work directly with schools in at least year 3 of improvement; 76 of these schools were in restructuring planning or implementation. A smaller portion of the federal funding went to Regional Education Service Agencies as part of Georgia's statewide system for providing technical assistance to schools and districts identified for NCLB improvement. Nearly all of these schools were in year 1 to 3 of school improvement. The rest was used by GDOE for state administration specifically related to school improvement, and the remaining funds were rolled over to 2008-09.

continued...

Box 2. State Uses of the Title I Set-Aside for School Improvement (cont.)

Maryland awards the school improvement funds directly to districts with schools identified for improvement in the form of grants that districts must apply for. In 2007-08, the state awarded $7,145,298 in federal Title I school improvement funding to seven school districts with schools in restructuring or other stages of improvement. Maryland also sets aside state funds for schools in improvement. Funding for State School Improvement Grants (SSIG) is appropriated annually by the Maryland General Assembly and is available to both Title I and non-Title I schools in all stages of improvement. SSIG applications are considered separately from school restructuring plans. In 2007-08, districts received $10,000 per school, plus $33.63 per pupil, for each school in improvement and those that exited improvement based on the 2007 state tests. High schools were awarded an additional $29.13 per pupil.

In **Michigan**, the majority of the 2007-08 state set-aside for schools in improvement, approximately $14 million, went to the state's Intermediate School Districts, the regional education agencies that provide professional development and other services to schools and districts. These services include audits, Process Mentor Teams, principal fellowships, and coaches, are described in more detail below. Since 2003-04, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has also used a 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. To receive the funds, districts and schools had to write grant applications 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.

Ohio requested and received permission from the U.S. Department of Education in 2006 to change the way it allocated the 95% of the school improvement set-aside that must be awarded to schools, districts, or other local educational agencies. While all Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, and restructuring are in the pool of districts eligible for the funds, the state now gives funds only to districts that are willing to sign a letter of commitment and that allow providers of coaching, professional development and other services to access the teachers and data. Eligible districts then receive funds through a need-based formula that measures the number of their schools in improvement and the number and percentage of non-proficient students districtwide. At least 75% of all schools in the selected districts receive funds. Ohio has also used 5% of its set-aside funds to develop state diagnostic teams.

State Supports for Restructuring

NCLB does not require any specific state supports for schools in restructuring. States in our study varied a great deal in the intensity, prescriptiveness, and types of supports they offered restructuring schools. Some of these differences are probably due to the differences in funding for school improvement and numbers of schools in improvement. For example, California has more schools in restructuring without a commensurately larger amount of funding for schools in improvement and, therefore, has less funding spread over more schools than other states. Some of these differences, however, are probably due to differences in state interpretations of NCLB and differences in beliefs about what will help schools improve. Unlike other reports that attempt to classify the strength of state approaches to restructuring (Calkins et al., 2007; Ziebarth & Hassel, 2005), we instead found that these state experiences are too varied to be placed on a simple continuum and therefore have identified important similarities and differences between states and provided details about each state.

All five states do the following for schools in restructuring:

- Require districts and schools to submit a plan for each restructuring school, as required by federal law
- Track the choices schools make about "official" restructuring strategies
- Provide tools, such as needs assessments, to help schools and districts plan for restructuring and make good decisions about implementation. In Ohio, these tools are currently being piloted but are not used universally in restructuring schools.

After these basic similarities, states diverged quite a bit. They did not, however, fall into a clear continuum from weak to strong or less active to very active. The following examples illustrate the diversity of state actions:

- California, Georgia, Maryland, and Michigan have conferences or extra professional development events aimed at helping schools and districts with restructuring and school improvement.

- Georgia, Michigan, and Maryland monitor or provide on-site technical assistance to some of their restructuring schools to help ensure that schools are actually implementing their restructuring plans and to provide guidance for additional improvements. Georgia and Michigan conduct monitoring visits to all restructuring schools, while Maryland only visits schools in their third year of restructuring (year 7 of improvement).

- Georgia, Michigan, and Maryland track which schools have been in restructuring implementation for multiple years (beyond year 5 of improvement) and provide more intense support and monitoring to these schools.

- Michigan and Maryland offer ongoing extra professional development specifically for some principals of restructuring schools.

- Michigan and Georgia provide on-site leadership coaches or facilitators for schools in restructuring.

- Michigan reviews restructuring plans and delays funding until plans meet with state approval.

The following sections give more details about how each state supports schools in restructuring.

CALIFORNIA

Since schools began implementing restructuring, California has created four tools designed to help schools and districts make good decisions about restructuring (available at www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/improvtools.asp). Two of these tools are surveys, one to analyze the kinds of district-level support schools need, and another to gauge how effectively a school has implemented nine "essential program components" which state research has found to be present in California schools with higher academic achievement. The other two tools are self-assessments, one to determine how schools and districts are serving students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, and the other to assess how schools and districts are serving English language learners (ELLs).

The state also holds an annual symposium for schools in improvement, portions of which are videotaped and available online. In the fall of 2007, the On the Right Track Symposium was the main state professional development event for schools in restructuring. The 870 participants came from about 120 districts, or about 10% of California's districts. Presenters at the symposium were quick to admit they did not have packaged answers about what schools should do to improve. Instead, they emphasized a collaborative approach that involved all key stakeholders and that based decisions on data collected from the aforementioned state surveys, the state test, and other available local sources.

California does not specifically monitor schools in restructuring. Some restructuring schools receive monitoring and additional support for school improvement from the state, but this is typically conducted through other programs, such as the state's accountability system, and is not triggered because a school is in restructuring. California does not differentiate restructuring for schools that have been in restructuring for multiple years.

GEORGIA

The Georgia Department of Education sets specific restructuring procedures for schools and districts to follow, and restructuring plans must address state goals and priorities. The longer a school remains in restructuring, the more intense the support and monitoring it receives from the state.

Support for Planning

Each fall, the GDOE holds a one-day training session to prepare district leaders who oversee restructuring schools to create restructuring plans. The training relies heavily on the *School Restructuring Under No Child Left Behind* guide (Learning Point Associates, 2006). The state also publishes a *School Improvement Fieldbook* that explains the requirements for all schools identified for improvement and the process for restructuring (Georgia Department of Education, 2007b).

Each action listed in a restructuring plan must address one or more "School Keys," a set of researched-based standards for Georgia schools aimed at improving student performance (Georgia Department of Education, 2007a). The Keys cover eight general areas: 1) curriculum; 2) assessment; 3) instruction; 4) planning and

organization; 5) student, family, and community support; 6) professional learning; 7) leadership; and 8) school culture.

Restructuring plans are written collaboratively by a district representative, school staff, parents, and community members and are submitted to the GDOE for approval. Throughout the planning phase, schools and districts receive support and training in the restructuring process from a regional state administrator. Restructuring schools are required to form a leadership team to craft a restructuring plan and oversee implementation. The team must meet at least twice a month and include, at minimum, the school principal, a representative group of the school's teachers, a GDOE "leadership facilitator," and a district administrator.

Support and Monitoring for Implementation

Georgia's support for restructuring schools has expanded over the years to include mentoring for principals, classroom coaching for teachers, and professional development on and off the school site, for all restructuring schools. A state team visits schools in year 6 of improvement for a three-day, comprehensive review called the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS), in which state officials interview staff, review data and documents, and observe teaching in order to assess how well the school meets criteria in the eight areas described in the School Keys. This review happens again in year 8.

Support and Monitoring for Schools in the Later Years of Restructuring

Georgia schools in restructuring that reach years 7 and 8 of school improvement are placed in "contract monitoring" and receive additional support and tighter monitoring:

- A leadership facilitator visits twice a week, rather than once a week.
- Under the guidance of the state and district, schools draw up 45- or 60-day action plans to improve areas identified as weak by the GAPSS analysis. A state contract monitor meets with school and district staff at the end of each plan cycle to monitor progress and determine next steps.
- Two-day statewide training sessions are held several times a year on how to teach the new standards.
- Schools are assigned an instructional coach in each subject for which the school failed to make AYP, to be paid for with federal school improvement funds.
- Schools must follow a prescribed schedule for teaching state standards in core subjects; the GDOE provides the units and pre- and post-tests to monitor student progress.
- A math facilitator visits twice a month to introduce the next set of standards that math teachers will be teaching.

MARYLAND

Maryland has supports in place for school restructuring planning and implementation and has just begun an on-site technical assistance system for these schools.

Needs Assessment

The Teacher Capacity Needs Assessment (TCNA), which had been a voluntary piece of the restructuring planning process in 2006-07, is now a requirement for all schools submitting a restructuring plan. In conjunction with this new requirement, MSDE staff deliver day-long training sessions for districts and schools about how to conduct the TCNA.

Principal Professional Development

The MSDE sponsors a year-long professional development program for some principals working in restructuring schools. The academy emphasizes principals' capacity to conduct purposeful classroom observations that link instruction and evaluation.

Support and Monitoring for Schools in the Third Year of Restructuring

MSDE has worked on modifying and improving the Restructuring Implementation Technical Assistance process (RITA). RITA is intended to assist schools that have been in restructuring implementation for at least three years and appear to not be making progress. Based on experiences from the 2006-07 pilot, the state has increased the site visits included in the process from one to two days and has refined the standards

and indicators used to identify which programs and systems are effective in raising student achievement and which need to be improved or eliminated.

MICHIGAN

Michigan has developed several state-specific requirements for schools in restructuring, aimed both at assisting schools in restructuring and ensuring that schools and districts do what is required of them under restructuring. 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 week-long principal 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.

School Audits

Beginning in 2006-07, the state audited schools in years 3 of improvement and beyond. Comprehensive audits were conducted 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 was designed to reflect the state's School Improvement Framework. The auditors use this instrument both to gather data for MDE and to accurately report their observations to the school and the Process Mentor Teams. Auditors are typically experienced Michigan educators, and 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.

Process Mentor Teams

In 2007-08, Process Mentor Teams were added to take information from the audits and use it to assist schools. The team consists of three people: a district-level person, a representative from MDE, and a person from the district's Intermediate School District (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.

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, explained Mike Radke, assistant director of the Office of School Improvement Field Services Unit.

Leadership Coaches

The ISDs provide schools in years 3 of improvement and beyond with leadership coaches. Trained in a two-week residential summer academy, these coaches continue to receive training throughout the year. The coaches focus on school governance and school leadership, which are key principles in the School Improvement Framework's leadership strand.

Principal Fellowships

Principals of Title I Michigan schools in years 3 and beyond were also invited to attend the same two-week residential summer academy as the leadership coaches. The principal fellowships sought to bring together principals and coaches to create a common frame of reference for improvement efforts.

OHIO

Ohio does not support restructuring schools per se, but supports districts in corrective action or districts with large numbers of schools in improvement. Many of these districts also have schools in restructuring. State officials described Ohio's school improvement efforts as a three-tiered model of support for schools and districts at various stages of improvement, including schools in restructuring planning and implementation. The state has prioritized support for about 25 districts with large numbers and percentages of students missing AYP targets. Schools in restructuring are concentrated in these districts. Under the three-tiered model, the state progresses from providing a general level of support and oversight to all districts, to a more intense level of preventive support for districts and

schools that have failed to make AYP for a few years, and to the most intense levels of support and oversight for districts and schools that have failed to make AYP for the longest periods.

In 2007-08 the state piloted efforts to change how it delivers that intensive oversight and support. In the past, the state had a number of separate teams working with its most challenged districts: a literacy intervention team, a special education team, and an overall team supporting interventions. New diagnostic teams have begun making observations and collecting data in high-need districts to help central office staff in those districts develop data-based plans for improvement. In theory, the team will report its findings back to the district. District officials will then use the information, along with guidance from a separate state team and from a computerized tool called a "decision framework," to develop improvement plans. By school year 2009-10, the state intends to have in place a differentiated accountability system that will shift the focus away from districts and schools that have failed to make AYP for the most years and toward districts and schools with the largest numbers and percentages of students missing AYP targets.

Themes from Case Study Schools

Because the 19 districts and 42 schools participating in this study were chosen based in part on guidance from state departments of education, they are likely to overrepresent those that took restructuring seriously. It might be logical to assume that these schools would be largely successful in restructuring. But schools in our study have had varying success. This is a strength of our study. Other studies of school improvement have been criticized for examining only schools that have been successful in improving student achievement; with this pool of schools, it is impossible to determine whether the strategies cited by school officials as critical to their improvement are actually present in all schools or are unique to improving schools (Herman et al., 2008). Our analysis does have some limitations because schools were not randomly selected to implement particular strategies and the implementation was not monitored. We did, however, interview several individuals at each school and district; in California, Maryland, and Michigan, individuals were interviewed over multiple years, which helps ensure that our data are reliable.

To describe the effects of restructuring on the schools in our study, we grouped these schools into the following loose categories based on their 2007-08 AYP status:

- Schools that exited restructuring (5 schools)
- Schools that increased the percentage of proficient students over the years since 2002 for which comparable test data were available but did not exit restructuring (19 schools)[5]
- Schools that did not increase the percentage of proficient students over the years since 2002 for which comparable test data were available (14 schools)[6]
- Schools that did not make AYP based solely on the performance of specific subgroups of students rather than on the performance of the school as a whole (7 schools)

The numbers of schools in these categories total more than 42 because schools that missed AYP targets due to subgroups were included in more than one category. In addition, four schools could not be placed in any category because they did not have test data that was comparable over at least two years.

Although our case study districts and schools represent an intentional sample rather than a random sample, their official federal restructuring strategies mirror those of their states. Thirty schools (88% of those in the study) chose the any-other option, two schools (9%) replaced staff, one school (3%) became a charter school, and one (3%) both replaced staff and chose the any-other option. Eight other case study schools were in the planning phase of restructuring (year 4 of improvement) and were not yet required to state their restructuring choices. Because most case study schools used the any-other option, an in-depth study of differences among the federal options was not possible. We therefore examined similarities and differences among schools using the most frequently used federal strategies—the any-other

[5] Schools in some states and grades had only two years of comparable testing, so it is not possible to determine whether changes in student achievement represent an overall trend at the school.

[6] Ibid.

option and the staff replacement option. Where possible, we further examined these strategies according to whether the school had or had not increased the percentages of students scoring proficient since the inception of NCLB. Finally, we examined the experiences of the five schools that exited restructuring and the seven that did not make AYP due to subgroups separately, since the experiences of these schools would be expected to differ from those of the total pool of schools.

THE ANY-OTHER OPTION

Schools and districts tend to find strategies beyond the federal options more useful in helping schools improve. The majority of district and school officials in our case studies said their official federal restructuring strategy was not their primary strategy for improvement; instead, they used the any-other option to implement a variety of district- and school-based strategies. These additional strategies varied based on school needs, but three stood out as most frequently used: increased use of test data, tutoring for struggling students outside the regular academic day, and employment of an instructional or leadership coach. The experiences of case study schools with these three strategies are described in more detail below.

Data Use

Officials in all 42 schools (100%)—including schools that increased their percentages proficient and those that did not—said their schools relied heavily on increased use of test data to make instructional decision. Other studies have found that data-based decision making is a national trend (CEP, 2006e) and that the specific uses of these data vary a great deal (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006). Our findings from this study of restructuring suggest that simply using data is a less important indicator of school success than *how* schools use the data.

Our case study schools used data in a variety of ways. For example, staff in Willow Run Middle School in Michigan's Willow Run district used data frequently and intensely to make instructional decisions. In 2004-05, the school established benchmarks based on state standards and set up benchmark assessments. By 2005-06, teachers had 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 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 retaught skills they had not yet mastered according to data from the benchmark assessments. Grade-level teacher teams determined how students were grouped. Data use was one of the many factors staff cited that helped Willow Run exit restructuring based on 2006-07 testing.

In 2007-08, Willow Run High School entered restructuring. In contrast to the middle school, the high school was in the very early stages of increasing data use. To flesh out the restructuring plan in school year 2007-08, Principal Larry Gray said the school gathered more data about student achievement, but these data were mostly collected annually or biannually rather than biweekly. First, staff reviewed all the course exit exams to make sure there is consistency by grade and subject. Second, the school had 9th and 10th graders take diagnostic exams sponsored by MDE that predict achievement on the state test.

Willow Run's example might suggest that schools need to ramp up their data use with more frequent data collection, analysis, and curricular modifications, and it certainly appears that the high school will follow the middle schools' example. But there may be limits to the amount of data collection and analysis schools can do.

At least one of our case study schools reported that ramping up data use had led to too much testing. The Mansfield City Schools in Ohio instituted a schedule of benchmark assessments at Newman Elementary to help teachers track student progress and adjust instruction as needed before the administration of state accountability tests. In elementary reading, the district chose to use AIMSWeb, a Harcourt-produced system to track student data from both the DIBELS early literacy assessment and Harcourt's curriculum-based tests. With multiple subjects involved, elementary teachers are responsible for administering more than 20 assessments in a year. "We don't really teach anymore. I've heard that from every teacher lately, that all we're doing is testing," said kindergarten teacher Carter Townsend. "We know what [students] don't know, but we're not able to do anything about it because as soon as you turn around, you've got to test again."

These variations in data use merit further examination to determine where the happy medium lies between too much and too little testing and how the quality of data use impacts student achievement.

Tutoring for Struggling Students

Interviewees in the majority (93%) of the 42 case study schools said that tutoring for struggling students outside the regular academic day was important in helping to raise their percentages proficient. All of the schools that exited restructuring and all that increased their percentages proficient cited this type of tutoring as important to their progress. The percentage was slightly lower (79%) for schools that had not increased their percentages proficient. Although tutoring may be a strategy characteristic of improving schools, other factors may also be involved. For example, how well schools use data to monitor student progress in tutoring may affect the success of these students. Also, the 7% of schools that did not cite tutoring as an important strategy represents only three schools, all in the same district, so district factors may play a role in the schools' struggles.

It is also important to note that these tutoring programs, discussed by our case study districts, were provided by the schools themselves on the school site and, for the most part, were not part of the supplemental educational services—tutoring outside the school day—that schools must offer when they enter their second year of NCLB improvement. Many of the case study districts have been identified for improvement themselves and, under NCLB regulations, must use outside providers of supplemental educational services rather than providing these services themselves. Nationally, few students have opted to attend supplemental educational services, particularly when they are not offered at the school site (CEP, 2006e).

Eddy Middle School in Muscogee County, Georgia, is an example of a school that used data to identify students for tutoring. Adopting a strategy recommended by the state, teachers kept data books that tracked students' progress on state standards, daily attendance, participation in tutoring programs, and the teacher's contact with parents. Students who appeared to be struggling were asked to attend an after-school program twice a week with 50 minutes each of math and language arts. (Other students enrolled at their parents' request.) In addition, the school ran an evening school from 4 to 8 p.m. for students who were suspended, disruptive, or frequently tardy or who simply performed better in a smaller setting. Pairs of teachers took turns staffing the evening school, which served up to 10 students at a time.

At Baker Middle School in the same district, students just above or below the proficient mark on state tests got special attention. "We identify their weakness," said 6th grade teacher Phyllis Brown. "When it comes to after-school tutoring, they get priority. We make sure we conference with them more."

High schools, such as Grant Union in Sacramento, California and Stewart-Quitman in Stewart County, Georgia, offered tutoring aimed at improving students' achievement so they could both pass state tests and complete coursework. For example, Stewart-Quitman provided morning and after-school tutoring for students to help them pass the state graduation test, part of which counts towards AYP. Students who needed to make up credits could log onto the computer for a virtual high school course.

As these examples show, identifying students for tutoring requires fairly sophisticated use of data. Providing tutoring also requires extra staff time or additional staff members, which can mean an increased financial burden. Maryland's Baltimore City district, for example, has implemented a middle school reform initiative in a small number of chronically underperforming schools that are also in restructuring. The district hired additional teachers to provide tutoring in these schools. Other Maryland districts, like Baltimore County and Prince George's County, use school improvement funds to pay to current staff to provide these before-school, after-school, and Saturday programs.

Coaches

About three-fourths (76%) of the case study districts employed some time of a coach who either worked with teachers on a particular subject area or worked with school leaders. There were some small differences in percentages of schools using these strategies. All case study schools that exited improvement employed coaches, compared with 68% of schools that had not exited but increased their percentages proficient and 79% of those that had neither exited nor raised their percentages proficient.

Kennedy Middle School in Atlanta, Georgia, used various types of coaches to help schools improve—a state math facilitator, a district model teacher leader, and a state leadership facilitator. Because the school was focused on raising achievement in math, a state math facilitator dropped by the school every week or two to introduce teachers to math standards in upcoming lessons and to observe lessons and provide quick feedback. The facilitator's comments reinforced the more regular feedback teachers received from the district's model teacher leader, with whom the facilitator worked closely on plans for improvement.

Kennedy's leadership facilitator, who serves as a principal mentor, spent one day a week in the school while the school was implementing restructuring in 2006-07 and was on hand for two days a week throughout 2007-08 since the school landed in contract monitoring, Georgia's sanction for schools in year 7 of improvement. Principal Lucious Brown explained the facilitator's role in this way: "She provides professional development. She assists with the walk-throughs. She provides observations for teachers. She co-teaches. She comes up with interventions and strategies along with us. She's an integral piece with the design [school improvement] team."

Tahoe-Truckee Middle School in California also used multiple academic coaches to target areas that needed improvement. The school added two full-time academic coaches, one for English language arts and one for math, as well as a half-time coach who focused on English language learners, a subgroup that was having difficulty meeting state targets. The school also provided a half-day of professional development and collaboration for teachers each Wednesday. During this time teachers used benchmark and biweekly student assessments to help plan instruction, and coaches collaborated with teachers on this planning.

Most of our case study schools appreciated coaches. A few teachers were unwilling to work with coaches, however. At Taft Elementary in Cincinnati, Ohio, instructional coaches had difficulty working with teachers. Although in 2005-06 coaches were in the building regularly, teaching model lessons to demonstrate instructional strategies, teachers did not implement these strategies in their own lessons. Nor did the principal push teachers to use the new strategies, said Beth Schnell, the school's Instructional Support Team lead principal. That year, 2005-06, Taft did not make AYP, and math scores declined. The following year, the school entered restructuring, the principal was replaced, and the coaching strategy changed from offering demonstration lessons to co-teaching. However, teachers still did not use new instructional techniques independently, according to Schnell, and reading scores declined by about 18 percentage points. For 2008-09, Taft has shifted its restructuring strategies. The school entirely restaffed and adopted a new curricular focus on science and math; through a partnership with the University of Cincinnati, Taft will become a school focused on science, technology, engineering, and math.

Both Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland and Cleveland Metropolitan Schools in Ohio had difficulty finding enough qualified coaches. In Cleveland, the district's Title I school improvement funds paid for instructional coaches and leadership training, but finding qualified coaches was so difficult that Cleveland redirected Title I school improvement funds the state had earmarked for coaching into publisher-provided professional development, according to Chief Academic Officer Eric Gordon.

In general, interviewees in most of the case study schools appreciated coaches and believed they were important to school improvement, but using instructional and leadership coaches was not without challenges. Hiring a coach required a financial investment. Even when districts had funding for coaches, they sometime had difficulty filling the positions. Once coaches were hired, they needed to develop good relationships with teachers. In schools where teacher resistance is high, coaches may not be effective.

REPLACING STAFF

Just three of our case study schools replaced staff as their official restructuring strategy, but an additional 14 replaced staff as an "unofficial" restructuring strategy on top of their official one. Of the 17 schools total that replaced staff, 12 faced difficulties in successfully restaffing.

Some principals in case study schools reported that they were unable to restaff their restructuring schools with qualified teachers. For the 2006-07 school year, Highland Elementary in Oakland, California, tried to

restaff but started the year with substitutes in several unfilled positions. Other schools in Detroit, Michigan, spent so much time over the summer of 2007 hiring staff that they had little or no time to plan for the new school year and therefore got off to a rocky start.

In addition, union regulations at times compromised successful restaffing. In Mansfield, Ohio, teachers bid for open positions in order of seniority as required by contract. In restructuring schools, this put some low-seniority teachers into positions for which they were not highly qualified. Also, layoffs due to declining enrollment in Detroit adversely affected restructuring. Detroit's Cleveland Intermediate/High School and Cerveny Middle had restructured by hiring younger (and they believed more energetic) teachers who had less seniority with the union. These new hires were among the first to be let go when districtwide layoffs were necessary.

Schools that did successfully replace staff, such as Willow Run Middle School and the three new 7th and 8th grade "Foundations Academies" in Flint, Michigan, typically had several things in common. Most were located in areas with stable or declining student enrollment and with no teacher and principal shortages and a substantial pool of applicants. Most had a plan or vision for the school that was widely publicized in the community and that allowed the school to overcome its past reputation as a "failing" school and attract enthusiastic, highly qualified applicants. Most districts negotiated with the union to resolve stumbling blocks in the contract. Finally, most of these successful districts had an effective hiring system in place and did not rely on principals alone to recruit and interview applicants.

For example, Arrowhead Elementary School in Prince George's County, Maryland, was able to successfully restaff by replacing teachers who did not meet NCLB's definition of "highly qualified." The district, which had already made it a priority to staff schools in improvement with highly qualified teachers, moved Arrowhead Elementary to the top of the staffing list as part of the school's restructuring plan. Similarly, Annapolis Senior High School in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, replaced school staff in the year before it moved into restructuring and received a full complement of supports from the district in restaffing the school, including holding a job-fair specifically for the school and hiring a temporary co-principal to assist with managing the school while the principal conducted interviews.

Sobrante Park in Oakland, California, was somewhat of an exception. The school did have vision for restructuring but was located in an area with a dearth of teachers and received little support from the district due to a staff shortage in human resources at the time. Principal Marc Franc, who had been with the school for many years, anticipated the restaffing and was able to recruit quality teachers using his contacts within the district and drawing on his current teachers' professional friendships. Overall, however, our case studies suggest that replacing staff can have unintended negative consequences, even though this strategy is sometimes useful in combination with additional strategies.

SCHOOLS THAT EXITED RESTRUCTURING

None of the staff we interviewed in the case study schools that exited restructuring could point to a single strategy that they believed was the key to improving student achievement. For example, Principal Kim Shaw at Palm Tree Elementary in California's Palmdale district said it was impossible to identify any one thing that made the school perform well enough to exit restructuring. Instead, she said, the school benefited from a global focus on student achievement. "We didn't really talk about, 'We're in restructuring and we need to do this.' It was, 'We need to do what's good for kids and student achievement,'" she explained.

These schools did have things in common. All had been working to improve student achievement for at least three years. Several schools started their strategies before being officially identified for restructuring under NCLB. All used benchmark assessments frequently (weekly to monthly) to monitor student achievement. Teachers then used these assessments to make instructional decisions and identify struggling students. All the schools followed up by providing extra tutoring for these students.

All schools also employed some type of coach to help improve academic instruction or leadership. Palm Tree Elementary and Sobrante Park Elementary, both in California, had Reading First coaches who helped teachers improve their instruction and assisted with tutoring for struggling readers. Hillside Elementary and Willow Run Middle School in Michigan had leadership coaches who assisted principals and coordinated the schools' many improvement initiatives. Bladensburg Elementary in Maryland had both an instructional coach and a leadership coach.

Our findings are not meant to suggest that a combination of data-based decision making, tutoring, and coaching will keep schools out of NCLB improvement once they exit. At least one staff member in each of the case study schools that exited improvement expressed concerns about maintaining student achievement and continuing to make AYP. The primary concern was that the state's percentage proficient targets will rise in accordance with NCLB until 2014, when the law requires all states to set the target of 100% of students performing at the proficient level. All states have increased their targets, but in some states, like Michigan and California, these targets rise very steeply in the next few years, making it unlikely that all schools will be able to keep up (CEP, 2008g). Principal Michele Sandro of Hillside Elementary also voiced concern about the performance of students with disabilities, who constitute a high proportion of the school's enrollment.

School test score data show that our case study schools do have reason to be concerned about maintaining student achievement. Three of the five had slight dips in test scores based on 2006-07 testing and one, Hillside Elementary, did not make AYP based on the performance of students with disabilities.

Maintaining student achievement in exited schools is made more difficult because these schools often lose some of their resources. In states that funnel school improvement funds directly to schools, those that exit restructuring eventually lose that funding. For example, Michigan extends the funds for one year, but Willow Run Middle School will no longer qualify for the funds in 2008-09 and anticipates having difficulty funding some of its initiatives at the same level as in previous years.

Several of our case study schools—including Harrison, Sobrante Park, and Willow Run—are also in districts with declining enrollment. Because most funding is tied to enrollment, these schools will face general declines in revenue at the same time their school improvement funds disappear.

In addition, several case study schools have national grants that helped the school improve but are now coming to an end. Hillside Elementary had a Comprehensive Schools grant, and Palm Tree Elementary and Sobrante Park Elementary had Reading First grants. While Sobrante Park Principal Marco Franco said he did not think special funds and assistance for restructuring should continue forever, he did view the lack of adequate public school funding as an issue that deserved more national attention: "Things are not going to change until our national priorities shift away from war and commercialization, and we say, 'You know what? Our kids are important.'"

SCHOOLS THAT MISSED AYP DUE TO SUBGROUPS ONLY

Seven of our case study schools failed to meet state targets for AYP based on the performance of students in one or more subgroups, even though the performance of their general population was high enough to meet state targets. Of these schools, one missed due to the performance of ELL students only, and one missed due to the performance of students with disabilities only. Two missed due to the performance of both low-income students and students with disabilities. Two others missed due to the performance of three subgroups. In some schools, including North Tahoe Middle school in California, the subgroups that missed AYP targets overlapped considerably.

Educators surveyed or interviewed as part of CEP's national studies of NCLB implementation praised the law for bringing attention to traditionally underserved subgroups (CEP, 2006d). Our case study schools that missed AYP targets due to subgroups typically did provide special programs or initiatives aimed at improving the achievement of these students. For example, Mount Vernon Middle School, which missed AYP due to the performance of students with disabilities, moved toward a full-inclusion model for these students. Four years ago, said Mount Vernon Superintendent Steven Short, "we were total pullout. In the last two years we've gone to an inclusion-type model for our students. Our pullout now is extremely limited." Students with significant cognitive disabilities were being included in regular classrooms for the first time, with support from a co-teacher versed in special education.

Getting teachers in Mount Vernon Middle, including special educators, to embrace inclusion was a challenge, but some initially reluctant teachers found the experience of teaching students with disabilities transformative. In spring 2007, at the end of the first school year of implementation, "several of the staff members said to me it was the most rewarding experience they had had," recalled Debra Strouse, a veteran teacher who left the classroom

to lead school efforts to increase test scores. "They didn't realize the students could do what they did."

Still, the focus on student subgroups has been less intense than might be expected. All our case study schools that missed targets due to subgroups had other initiatives that focused on increasing achievement for all students in the school. Perhaps due to rising state targets and the desire to see all students succeed, many of the schools' resources were still focused on the school as a whole. At Hillside Elementary in Michigan, for example, the school exited restructuring but then missed AYP targets due to the performance of students with disabilities. "When you fail with your special education kids, like we did at state testing time, what you don't want to do is just focus on those kids," Principal Michele 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."

Recommendations to Restructure Restructuring

Several of this study's findings suggest that current restructuring policies and practices are flawed. Nationally, large numbers of schools are entering restructuring, and many remain in restructuring for multiple years. Our analysis of restructuring data in California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio showed that just 19% of schools that implemented restructuring in those states made adequate yearly progress in 2006-07, and all five states had schools in year 8 of school improvement. State, district, and school officials reported a number of obstacles to restructuring implementation, such as attempting to replace staff or hire a coach but being unable to fill positions. States and districts cannot simply close all these struggling schools and still maintain their obligation to provide public education to all children.

Many state, district, and school officials in our study, however, expressed hope that particular school improvement efforts would eventually help schools to raise student achievement enough to meet state targets, and some were able to point to encouraging data from individual schools. These promising restructuring practices were more complex and coordinated than strategies within the current federal policy. Based on interviews with our case study participants who were on the frontlines of implementing restructuring, it does not appear to be time to toss out restructuring altogether. Instead, it is time to restructure restructuring.

We have several recommendations for this effort. First, because no single option appears more effective than another, policymakers should expand the federal options for restructuring and encourage states to create state-specific strategies. This would allow states to draw on research findings about school improvement as well as on the experiences of practitioners in their own state. Then, states need to monitor restructuring to ensure adequate implementation and determine which strategies are and are not working.

These two changes are unlikely to lead to large numbers of schools exiting restructuring immediately. Therefore, federal and state officials need to consider policies to address schools that remain in restructuring. Because implementing school reform initiatives takes more than one year, these policies should not involve making changes every year, but instead should involve monitoring implementation, allowing promising strategies time to work, and changing course when strategies are clearly ineffective.

Finally, as more schools exit restructuring, state and district officials should work to help the schools maintain student achievement. Findings from our case study schools suggest that taking restructuring supports away prematurely could be detrimental to schools. States and districts should help schools adequately plan to replace these funds and services and should continue to funnel funds and services to these schools until other sources of needed support are found.

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Credits and Acknowledgments

This report was written by Caitlin Scott, CEP consultant. Research assistance was provided by CEP consultants Elizabeth Duffrin, Maureen Kelleher, and Brenda Neuman-Sheldon. Nancy Kober, CEP consultant, edited the report. Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO, and Diane Stark Rentner, CEP's director of national programs, provided advice and assistance.

We are grateful to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which supports this project, and the George Gund Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Phi Delta Kappa International Foundation, which provide general resources to the Center. The statements made and the views expressed in this report are solely the responsibility of the Center on Education Policy.

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