Abstract Title Page

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Title: Differences in the Policies, Programs, and Practices (PPPs) and Combination of PPPs across Turnaround, Moderately Improving, and Not Improving Schools

Authors and Affiliations: Rebecca Herman, American Institutes for Research
rherman@air.org
Mette Huberman, American Institutes for Research
mhuberman@air.org

Abstract Body

Limit 4 pages single-spaced.

Background / Context:

Description of prior research and its intellectual context.

To review strategies for identifying CLP and TA schools, we explored existing methodological papers for theory and turnaround studies for tested approaches. To identify turnaround policies, programs, and practices (PPPs) that may relate to TA, we drew on turnaround, effective schools, and comprehensive school reform (CSR) research. Each body of work has limitations. The turnaround research, as a new area of investigation, includes primarily case studies and correlational studies. There is a substantial body of research on PPPs related to school improvement, including the effective schools research; however, some of that research is not of rigorous design, and it is not clear that promising practices that emerge from that research are applicable to the specific challenge of rapid and dramatic improvements expected of turnaround. We also looked at the comprehensive school reform research, especially to consider the integration and implementation of PPPs in a coherent reform effort. Again, it is not clear if the findings from CSR apply to turnaround. The TALPS study aims to build on the existing research base to develop promising methodologies to identify chronically low-performing and turnaround schools, as well as to identify promising strategies for turning around chronically low-performing schools. By looking specifically at schools identified as turnaround, in comparison to nonturnaround, schools, this study may help discern what lessons from prior research apply to turnaround efforts and what unique solutions—and challenges—are associated with turnaround.

The TALPS study was composed of Study I and Study II. Study I focused on identifying turnaround schools, as distinct from moderately improving (MI) and not improving (NI) schools. Study I used student-level data from Florida, North Carolina, and Texas, spanning Grades 3 to 8 for the six school years between 2002-03 and 2007-08. We focused on student scores on state accountability assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics. We examined both achievement level (at a given grade level) and growth (progress students make as they move from one grade to the next). The Study I identified 1,042 schools as CLP, including TA, MI, and NI schools, which were the population of Study II sample.

Purpose / Objective / Research Question / Focus of Study:

Description of the focus of the research.

Study II sought to examine whether particular policies, programs, and practices (PPPs) occurred more often in turnaround (TA) schools than in nonturnaround (moderately improving and not improving) schools (RQ1).

The conceptual framework for Study II (see Exhibit 1) posits that external PPPs, such as federal, state, and district accountability pressures and resources, contribute to the quality of human resources and to the PPPs adopted by schools. Schools can adopt PPPs that intend to improve school leadership, support teaching, support learning, improve data use, address behavior, improve parent and community relations, and increase time for teaching and learning. A given turnaround initiative may include elements from different PPP categories (e.g., a curriculum package may include professional development). Further, schools may adopt PPPs

within or across categories; we do not assume, in the conceptual framework, that schools adopt all the PPPs in any given category.
<Insert Exhibit 1 Here>

Research Design:
Description of the research design.

To address RQ1, we relied primarily on a school principal survey, developed to document PPPs among chronically low-performing schools that were associated with school turnaround.

Survey development. The premise of the survey was that, given past and current accountability policies and school reform programs, most chronically low-performing schools have made some efforts to improve student performance. By asking about the specific improvement efforts that the school relied on most heavily in the key study period (fall 2003–spring 2008), we would be able to compare the PPPs in schools at different levels (elementary and middle school) that had different outcomes (TA, MI, or NI). This approach would enable us to analyze PPPs that may be unique to or common across different types of schools.

Sample. To develop the survey sample, we began with the 1,042 non-magnet schools identified in Study I as CLP, including TA, MI, and NI schools. The team planned to sample 125 schools per group, for an overall sample of 750 schools. However, there were fewer than the required 125 TA, MI, and NI schools within the middle school strata. In order to have a total of 750 schools in our sample, we included all middle schools and we increased the sample size of the elementary school strata to 170 TA, 169 MI, and 170 NI schools, respectively. The 750 sampled schools were from 228 school districts and included 228 TA, 280 MI, and 242 NI schools. (See Exhibit 2).
<Insert Exhibit 2 Here>

Administration. The school survey was administered online. For principals who did not complete the online survey by November 15, 2010, we attempted a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI). Intensive follow-up procedures—including subsampling nonrespondents for focused follow-up—were conducted to increase response rates. The effective rate was 67% (See Exhibit 3).
<Insert Exhibit 3 Here>

Data Collection and Analysis:
Description of the methods for collecting and analyzing data.

We weighted the survey data to reflect the full population of 1,042 CLP schools in the three states (FL, NC, and TX). The analyses examined the frequencies of PPPs hypothesized to be related to school turnaround and tested for differences between groups of schools (e.g., turnaround versus nonturnaround schools, elementary versus middle schools, one-subject versus two-subject turnarounds). Many of the PPPs were represented by a single survey item. To test the significance of the differences between the groups of schools, we used chi-square tests. Some PPPs were represented by a cluster of survey items; those were combined to form scales only if confirmatory factor analysis showed a scale reliability of 0.60 or higher.

Findings / Results:
Description of the main findings with specific details.

While our survey analysis did find some differences by turnaround status, we found that many more PPPs (for example, funding) did not differ by turnaround status. We found the following differences between TA and NI schools:

External PPP. There were few clear differences in how TA and non-TA schools experienced external supports and pressures. Principals in TA schools were less likely to report changes in the district organization, according to the survey; this finding was both statistically significant and substantively large. External PPP may play an indirect role that is not fully explored in these descriptive analyses, which drew primarily on school-level data.

Human Resources. In terms of human resources, turnaround schools were more likely to draw highly qualified teachers (according to the principal survey); those teachers also were less experienced (according to the administrative data). Prior research suggests that the value added of teacher experience tapers off after several years (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006). Turnaround schools appear better able to keep effective teachers (according to the administrative data) compared with nonturnaround schools. These findings were statistically significant.

School PPP. The principal survey suggests that many school PPPs were more likely to be present in TA than NI schools. TA schools appeared more likely to use PPPs that were focused on the core of instruction, instructional focus, targeted instruction, and learning time. In specific, TA schools appeared more likely to report an instructional focus for the principal, use of tiered interventions and tutoring, and extended learning time opportunities. These differences were substantively large, but not statistically significant.

TA schools were more likely to have high teacher job satisfaction and to provide technical assistance on data use; these findings were both statistically significant and substantively large. TA schools also appeared more likely than NI schools to emphasize other elements of data use, such as reviewing data in teams and planning data collection and analysis; although these differences were substantively large, they were not statistically significant.

The survey results indicate that schools that adopted one PPP were likely to adopt others. In particular, five PPPs (each composed of multiple survey items) were highly correlated with each other: principal and teacher leadership, curriculum, targeted instruction, professional development and support, and purposive data use. However, none of these multi-item PPPs appeared to be individually associated with school turnaround status.

There are some differences by school level in PPPs. For example, elementary schools were more likely to report notification of other school closures (an indicator of accountability), and middle schools were more likely to report time-related changes, including extended class periods and changes in the daily schedule. These findings were both statistically significant and substantively large.

In some cases, the elementary and middle schools had different PPPs associated with school turnaround. For example, TA elementary schools were more likely than non-TA elementary schools to have experienced, highly qualified teachers join the school; in middle school, TA middle schools were less likely than non-TA middle schools to have experienced, highly qualified teachers join the school.

TA elementary schools were more likely than non-TA elementary schools to report high teacher job satisfaction, review data in teams, and report teacher training on data use; that was not true for middle schools. TA middle schools were more likely to report inservice that was aligned with data and school goals and less likely to report a new reading or mathematics

curriculum, or to revise parent and community communications compared to non-TA middle schools; that was not true for elementary schools. These findings were statistically significant and substantively large.

We also compared patterns of use of PPPs for two-subject CLP schools that had turned around in two subjects versus those that had turned around in one subject, to better understand if some PPPs are associated with global (two-subject) versus focused (one-subject) turnaround. Two-subject turnaround schools were statistically significantly more likely to report to have little turnover of effective teachers and high teacher job satisfaction. One-subject turnaround schools were statistically significantly more likely to report to have a new mathematics curriculum and to provide new teacher support.

Conclusions:

Description of conclusions, recommendations, and limitations based on findings.

The TALPS findings, consistent with prior research, suggest a complex interrelationship among PPPs. For example, the survey data indicate that some PPPs may be associated with turnaround at both the elementary and middle school level, while others are associated with turnaround at only one level.

It appears from this study that (1) accountability pressures and support from the district combined with (2) strong instructional leadership, (3) strategic staffing (i.e., strategic recruitment, assignment, and "counseling out" of ineffective staff), (4) intensive professional development, and (5) data use focused on identifying and assisting struggling students are key components of a school's turnaround process. How these components work together and are implemented should be explored further in future real-time, qualitative research efforts.

Appendices

Not included in page count.

Appendix A. References

References are to be in APA version 6 format.

Aladjem, D. K., Le Floch, K. C., Zhang, Y., Kurki, A., Boyle, A., Taylor, J. E., et al. (2006). *Models matter: The final report of the national longitudinal evaluation of comprehensive school reform*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2006). Teacher-student matching and the assessment of teacher effectiveness. *Journal of Human Resources, 41*(4), 778–820.

Kurki, A., Boyle, A., & Aladjem, D. K. (2006). Implementation: Measuring and explaining the fidelity of CSR implementation. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 11*(3–4), 255–277.

Turnbull, B. J. (2006). Comprehensive school reform as a district strategy. In D. K. Aladjem & K. M. Borman (Eds.), *Examining comprehensive school reform* (pp. 81–114). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Appendix B. Tables and Figures

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Exhibit 1. Conceptual framework

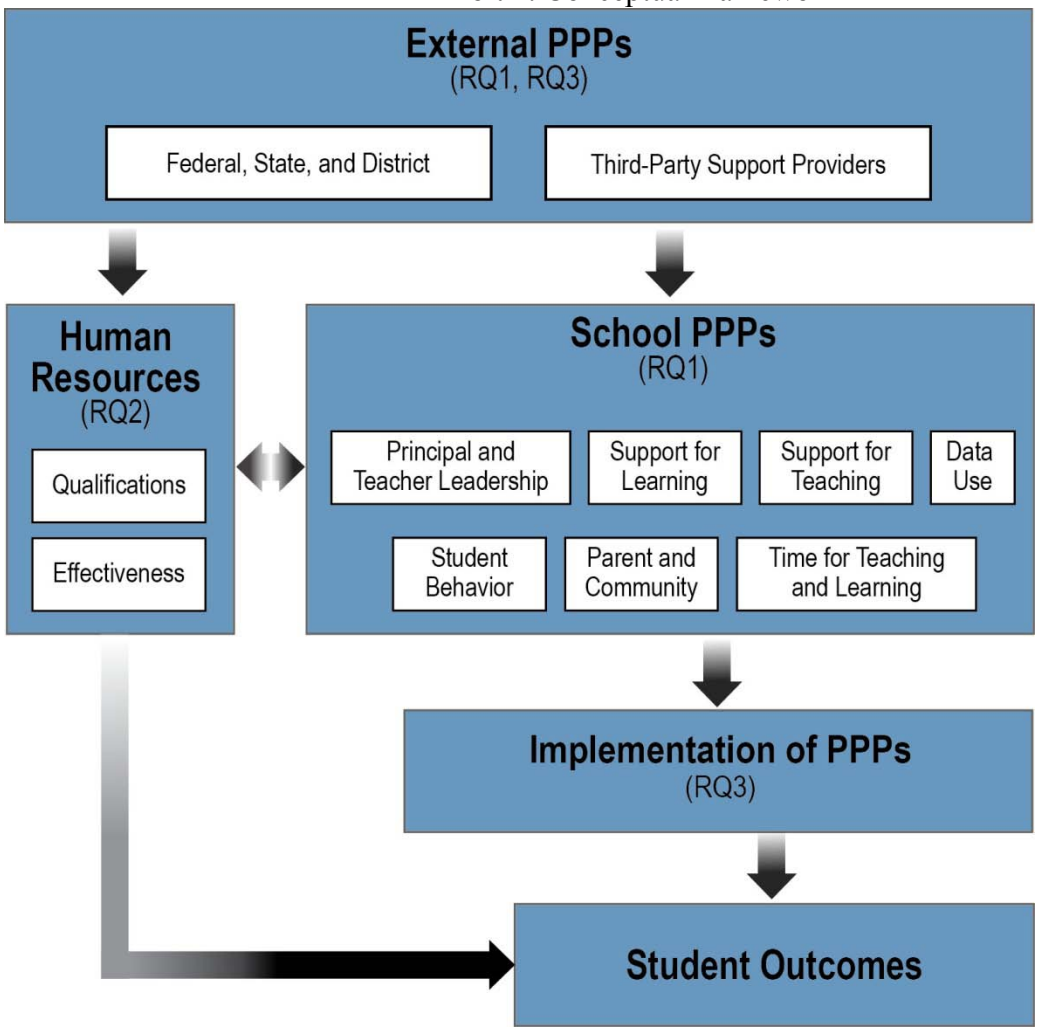

Exhibit 2: Number of Schools in Final School Survey Intended Sample

	Elementary*	Middle**	Total
Turnaround Schools	170	58	**228**
Moderate Improvement Schools	169	111	**280**
Not Improving Schools	170	72	**242**
Total	**509**	**241**	**750**

* A random sample of elementary schools identified as CLP in Study I was included in the survey sample.

** All middle schools identified as CLP in Study I were included in the survey sample.

Exhibit 3: Survey Response Rates

	Core Survey		Follow-Up		Combined Core and Follow-Up		
	N Eligible (original sample) (A)	N Complete (B)	N Sampled (C)	N Complete (D)	Effective N Complete (core and weighted follow-up) (E)[1]	Effective Response Rate (core and weighted follow-up) (F)	Unweighted Response Rate (G)
North Carolina							
ES—MI	22	11	4	3	19.3	88%	64%
ES—NI	46	22	9	1	24.7	54%	50%
ES—TA	19	11	6	3	15.0	79%	74%
MS—MI	22	11	4	4	23.0	100%	65%
MS—NI	36	14	9	4	23.8	66%	50%
MS—TA	12	4	6	2	6.7	56%	50%
Subtotal	158	73	38	17	111.0	70%	57%
Texas							
ES—MI	108	53	22	7	70.5	65%	56%
ES—NI	71	35	14	4	45.3	64%	55%
ES—TA	122	60	24	11	88.4	72%	58%
MS—MI	64	27	15	4	36.9	58%	48%
MS—NI	18	7	9	1	8.2	46%	44%
MS—TA	38	23	6	0	23.0	61%	61%
Subtotal	421	205	90	27	269.8	64%	55%
Florida							
ES—MI	39	15	10	4	24.6	63%	49%
ES—NI	53	20	12	8	42.0	79%	53%
ES—TA	29	14	6	1	16.5	57%	52%
MS—MI	24	14	4	3	21.5	90%	71%
MS—NI	18	9	9	3	12.0	67%	67%
MS—TA	8	2	6	0	2.0	25%	25%
Subtotal	168	74	47	19	113.2	66%	54%
Total	750	352	175	63	494.0	67%	55%

[1] The effective number complete is calculated using this equation: B+(D*((A-B)/C)).