



The Turnaround Challenge

Supplement to the Main Report

New Research, Recommendations, and a Partnership Framework for States and School Districts

Prepared through a grant from
the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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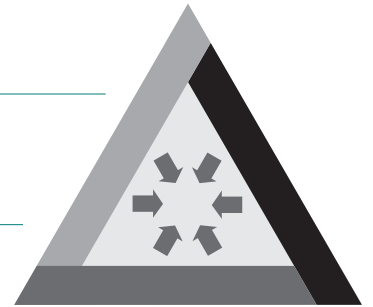
Supplement to the Main Report

The Turnaround Challenge

**Why America's best opportunity to
dramatically improve student achievement
lies in our worst-performing schools**

By Andrew Calkins, William Guenther, Grace Belfiore, and Dave Lash

New Research, Recommendations, and a Partnership Framework for States and School Districts



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Drilling Down on School Turnaround

Closer analysis at the state, district, school, and student levels

The turnaround recommendations and framework in *The Turnaround Challenge* grew out of both new research and synthesis of extensive existing research, as carried out by Mass Insight Education & Research Institute and its partners since September 2005. The highlights of this analysis are presented in the main report.

If the main report is the tip of proverbial iceberg, this supplement represents at least part of the mass underneath it. In the course of preparing the main report, we examined state and district intervention strategies and high-performing, high-poverty schools at a deeper level of specificity than what the design of

“Success is not the norm. While there have been successful turnarounds, the intervention experience is marked more by valiant effort than by notable success.”

– *Researcher Ronald Brady*

the main report allowed us to present. The highlights of that research are presented here in this supplement, along with a more extensive probe into poverty’s impact on learning and the consequent implications for the design of high-performing schools serving high-poverty enrollments.

Readers of *The Turnaround Challenge* should therefore regard this supplement not as a separate report, but as a set of “drill-downs” at four levels:

- **State:** Brief profiles of ten representative state strategies to intervene in failing schools
- **District:** More detailed exploration of four high-profile district experiments in school turnaround
- **School:** Close analysis of five high-performing, high-poverty schools that can help us visualize the end goal of turnaround efforts
- **Student:** Summary of emerging research on the three categories of impact that poverty has on students’ readiness to learn.

What’s *Not* Here: Turnaround Exemplars at Scale

There is fairly extensive research on what does not succeed in turning around chronically under-performing schools, and there is an emerging research base on the small number of schools effectively serving high-poverty student enrollments. However, there is practically no research available on successful turnaround of failing schools at *scale*. Some of the individual schools serving high-poverty students extraordinarily well are traditional public schools, but most (especially at the high school level) are new school startups. Unfortunately, as we point out in the main report, instances of complete school turnaround – from failing all the way to surpassing district averages – at the high school level are rare. Finding exemplary high schools that were once chronic under-performers is surpassingly rare.

In his 2003 report for the Thomas Fordham Foundation, *Can Failing Schools Be Fixed?*, Ronald Brady analyzed intervention in failing schools up to that date and concluded flatly: “Success is not the norm. While there have been successful turnarounds, the intervention experience is marked more by valiant effort than by notable success.” As he pointed out, “such well-intended efforts begin with a paradox. Much is known about how effective schools work, but it is far less clear how to move an ineffective school from failure to success.”

The continued search for documentation on individual schools that have made dramatic improvements has also come up short. As Public Impact reported in its 2005 publication, *Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff*, “we could identify neither cross-site analyses nor published case studies about individual schools that documented successful turnaround processes in schools. Experts from the two known state and national turnaround leader training programs confirmed this gap in the published research literature.”

The landscape is not without strong hints of promise. Clearly, individual schools have made sometimes quite dramatic improvements in their school culture, attendance rates, and their students’ academic performance. There are a number of studies of “turnarounds” that differ in degree and definition. Some of the schools profiled negotiated much of their “turn-around” before the implementation of standards-based education, so they do not provide particularly relevant comparisons to today’s reform context. Others have made strides over significantly longer periods of time than our current chronically under-performing schools have in order to produce improvement. Still others have impressively moved from chronically poor to consistently average – still not good enough by a long

shot for today’s public school graduates – or have failed to sustain initial improvements. Lastly, there are schools that have made commendable improvements in student performance or closed achievement gaps, but with student populations that are significantly different from the high-poverty, high-minority urban populations that make up the bulk of the schools now in need of turnaround under NCLB.

In fact, even broadening the scope to gather in high-performing, high-poverty high schools that may not have emerged from turnaround per se, the lack of exemplars is striking. Two recent studies that reviewed all of the available literature on high-performing, high-poverty schools confirm that result. “Mounting

Even broadening the scope to gather in high-performing, high-poverty high schools that may not have emerged from turnaround per se, the lack of exemplars is striking.

evidence suggests that reform at the secondary level is far more complicated than at the elementary level. While several whole-school reforms of the past fifteen years have elicited improved achievement in the lower grades, these reforms have failed to produce similar results in high schools.” That was the conclusion of the Boston-based Rennie Center in its 2005 report, *Scaling Up: Reform Lessons for Urban Comprehensive High Schools*. The report continues, “The momentum of a reform effort often stagnates against the bureaucratic forces of the large urban high school. While one prominent response has been to create new, smaller high schools that are student-centered and free from a history of inertia, this is a solution that impacts only a fraction of urban adolescents.”

Introduction continued

The Rennie Center's previous report in the area, *Head of the Class: Characteristics of Higher Performing Urban High Schools in Massachusetts*, had identified and provided preliminary information on the practices of high-performing urban high schools serving low-income, ethnically and racially diverse student populations. "Our findings," the authors wrote, "are quite startling. A review of available performance data revealed only one such Massachusetts school in which students consistently performed at high levels – University Park Campus School in Worcester." (UPCS is a Worcester public district school, high-poverty and non-selective, but it benefits from its partnership with nearby Clark University and very small size, and was a new start, rather than a turnaround. It is featured in the third section of this supplemental report, which describes five high-performing, high-poverty schools.) By broadening its search to include "higher" performing high-poverty urban high schools, the Rennie study included nine schools in total in its study, but significantly only two of the nine were non-selective, comprehensive high schools. The rest comprised three charter schools, two pilot schools (district schools with charter-like conditions) and two non-traditional district schools (including UPCS).

Karin Chenoweth's recently published book, *It's Being Done: Academic Success in Unexpected Schools* (Harvard University Press, 2007), confirms that not a lot has changed in the last year or two. Out of 15 schools she searched out across the country in an attempt to understand how some schools manage to help their students achieve despite highly adverse conditions, only three are high schools – and she had a hard time finding those.

UPCS was the easy one to spot. "I thought it would be easy," she writes, "to find more high schools. But I was wrong. All the resources of the Education Trust – and they are considerable – had been spent trying to find high schools that were successful in educating poor kids and kids of color, and they were coming up empty... Every time we thought we had found one, we would look a little deeper and find that the school somehow 'lost' half its students between freshman and senior years, or that it didn't bother administering the state test to half of its students, or that it required students to pass an exam to enter, or in some other way was disqualified from being considered."

The two other high schools that Chenoweth included are Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School in Elmont, New York, and Granger High School in Granger, Washington – and she had to make an exception for Granger, as the school hadn't made AYP, as had all of the other schools she profiled. She made the exception in part, she says, because "it had proven very difficult to find a high school that met all the criteria for selection." For its part, Elmont is not a truly high-poverty school; about a quarter of its students are free/reduced-price-lunch eligible. Its achievement levels do stand out clearly among middle and high schools in New York state that primarily serve students of color (more than half of Granger's enrollment is African-American).

For this project, Mass Insight reviewed all of the research we could identify that focused on high-performing, high-poverty education. (See Part 2.5 of the Main Report for a table extracting findings from 13 of the most prominent studies.) Our synthesis of that research produced the Readiness Model – a construct that defines what we believe the research reveals about how high-performing, high-poverty schools operate. Our analy-

sis was also directly supported by research that Mass Insight has conducted in Massachusetts over the past six years, as part of our Building Blocks Initiative for Standards-Based Reform. That research is distilled and presented in the third section of this supplemental report, and involves five high-performing schools serving relatively (some extremely) high-poverty enrollments. It is intended to set a benchmark – to show how a few high

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– *Writer Karin Chenoweth*

schools *right now* are producing dramatically better achievement outcomes (as well as graduation and four-year college matriculation rates) than peer schools serving demographically similar enrollments.

Along with the information on these benchmark schools, this supplement provides a more detailed examination of four districts that have launched strategies designed to proactively bring about comprehensive turnaround – that is, turnaround with a larger vision than simply “fixing” what’s “broken” within a chronically failing traditional-model school. We lead off with a profile of ten different approaches taken by states to address the challenge of failing schools, and, in the supplement’s final sec-

tion, we provide a deeper analysis of the challenges virtually all of these schools face at the student level, serving children who tend to lack the stable and supportive learning environment outside of school that their more affluent counterparts enjoy.

What’s Next: Operationalizing Comprehensive Turnaround

Thanks to continuing support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the research that produced *The Turnaround Challenge* – including this supplemental report – will continue. A follow-up grant from the Foundation will enable Mass Insight, working in conjunction with a number of national partners, to develop the workplans, policy templates, sample contract language, and other tools necessary for states, districts, and external partners to adapt and “operationalize” the recommendations in *The Turnaround Challenge*. These tools should be complete by mid-2008, and Mass Insight plans to work closely with selected states and large districts to customize and implement comprehensive turnaround strategies. Funding for the work will come from private and public sources; at some point, NCLB’s reauthorization and new state budgets (recognizing the urgency represented by the increasing number of schools identified as failing, the depth of the achievement gap in these schools, and its enormous social cost) should initiate a new stream of public investment.

Practitioners, policymakers, education reform leaders, and investors whose interest is piqued by the findings, analysis, and recommendations of this report – the foundation-laying element in Mass Insight’s larger turnaround initiative – are invited to contact us at insight@massinsight.org and to visit our website at www.massinsight.org. There is a lot of work to be done.



Intervention in Under-Performing Schools: Profiles of Ten States' Strategies

Mostly tentative steps, and more frustration than success

One of the most potentially radical aspects of No Child Left Behind is the Act's mandated timetable for restructuring schools with stagnant and "inadequate" performance. Five years into the law's implementation, nearly 2,000 schools nationwide have been identified as requiring restructuring.¹ This figure has risen rapidly and is predicted to continue rising in the years to come, to 5,000 or more schools by 2009-10. The proliferation of such restructuring designations under No Child Left Behind has resulted in restructuring efforts at a scale previously unprecedented in the United States.

No Child Left Behind establishes a Local Education Agency-centered approach to restructuring of schools, with few expressly mandated state actions. For the most part, required state actions are limited to conducting timely data analysis and providing

Recent policy changes in a few states signify – perhaps – growing recognition of the need for states to adopt an active role in school restructuring.

technical assistance to restructuring schools.² But states are also required to monitor LEA restructuring efforts and take corrective action when the LEA fails to fully carry out its responsibilities. Though explicit state responsibilities under No Child Left Behind are few, state approaches to restructuring vary widely. The factors influencing state roles are too numerous to fully enumerate, but the varied roles appear to be largely influenced by several factors including capacity concerns, political will, and the legal relationship between LEAs and the state.

As part of this project, Mass Insight conducted national research on the implementation of restructuring programs to determine which states have taken novel approaches to their role in

restructuring. This initial research identified 10 states that have either taken somewhat unique approaches or pursued strategies that offer important lessons about state intervention. The analysis that follows distills several of the most important lessons learned from this research, and informed the conclusions and recommendations presented in the main report. Specific information about the approaches taken in each of the 10 states is presented in the profiles that follow this analysis.

"Light-touch" Technical Assistance Is Not Enough

The states profiled differ widely in their will to implement meaningful school-level reforms. Such differences are certain to persist, but recent policy changes in a few states signify – perhaps – growing recognition of the need for states to adopt an active role in school restructuring. For example, Ohio, initially one of the more passive states, recently enacted regulations that dictate state takeover of chronically under-performing LEAs. In California, a state whose passive approach was a response to severe capacity concerns, officials have recently been implementing programs that increase state aid and technical assistance to LEAs that house the state's lowest performing schools. Recent changes to restructuring regulations in Massachusetts provide state officials with the power to intervene in schools more quickly and dramatically. Arizona officials have reformed their accountability system in ways that reward LEA compliance with state directives.

The reasons for such policy shifts are difficult to pinpoint, but likely include recognition of both enforcement requirements placed on states and the untenable political scenarios that can result from a passive state approach. Research included in this report, as well as research from other sources, suggests that meaningful change in chronically under-performing schools is more likely when the state assumes an active role.³ This research also suggests that such change has been less likely to occur when states fail to, at mini-

mum, take affirmative steps to ensure that LEAs engage in effective restructuring practices. With so many more low-performing schools being identified, failure to turn them around increases the pressure on states to intervene. This public pressure to incite change in chronically under-performing schools may create a politically difficult, or even untenable, scenario for state officials.

Proactive State Turnaround Policies Set Standards for Turnaround – and Consequences for Inaction

The main *Turnaround Challenge* report presents in some detail our analysis of the failure of most current state policymaking on school intervention, and our ideas for a more proactive response. The research on intervention strongly suggests the importance of the state role in defining what restructuring requires; otherwise, the open-ended fifth option in the current NCLB language on restructuring permits districts and schools (who have, after all, been the engineers of such poor performance) to fiddle when much more dramatic intervention is called for. Our analysis therefore calls for much more attention by state policy to establishing criteria for turnaround that, among other things, create the flexible, supportive kinds of operating conditions that turnaround leadership teams need in order to succeed. The analysis also calls for attention to capacity-building (both internally in schools and districts and externally among lead turnaround partners) and to mechanisms that will help organize turnaround work in clusters of schools for the sake of both efficiency and effectiveness.

Our analysis also suggests that none of these policies will have much impact where they're needed most if states fail to match these "carrots" – flexible operating conditions, added capacity, increased resources – with the "stick" of an unpalatable consequence for inaction. The positives of a truly comprehensive state turnaround initiative are vital, but insufficient without a consequence for districts that fail to act or schools that fail to improve

after two years of turnaround effort. In Michigan, for example, the lack of a clear consequence became problematic when schools began "aging out" of the No Child Left Behind continuum of mandated interventions. Michigan's reluctance to prescribe an ultimate consequence for these schools, exhibited by state officials' pleas for federal guidance, has resulted in tremendous pressure on the state to respond in the case of schools that have not met performance requirements for seven or more years. While Michigan's lack of an ultimate consequence is not unique among the states (many have publicly stated they would not take over schools), their implementation of No Child Left Behind has put their schools ahead of those in other states along the intervention continuum. It thus serves as an indicator of what may be in store for other states that choose a similarly passive route.

The state profiles suggest that, without an ultimate consequence, states have struggled to spur substantial change in all schools. Faced with this challenge, several states have devised creative responses. Florida, a state that had publicly announced it would not take over schools, threatened to withhold discretionary funds and grants from LEAs in which chronically under-performing schools were located if the LEAs failed to implement a set of intrusive reforms at the school level. Virginia was not permitted to take over schools, so it embraced its ability to take corrective action against LEAs that house unaccredited schools. It used this power to create additional incentives for LEA compliance. The Arizona

Ten Sample States

Program Change: Primarily coaching, PD, "light-touch" consulting

Alabama:	Striving for Coherence
California:	Uncertainty in the Face of Enormous Scale
Hawaii:	Experimenting with Outside Providers
Michigan:	Seeking Deeper Impact in Restructuring Schools
Ohio:	Moving Closer to Active Intervention

Program & People Change: Training in turnaround, applying new capacity

Virginia:	Investing in Turnaround Leaders
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Program, People, and Moving Towards Conditions Change:

Arizona:	Local Efforts, State Leverage
Florida:	Pressuring Districts for More Proactive Turnaround
Maryland:	Caught in Political Cross-fire
Massachusetts:	Seeking to Set Standards for Turnaround

State Intervention continued

system now dictates that severe state interventions may result from either stagnant low performance or a lack of good faith restructuring effort by the LEA. Each of these states has used terminal consequences conditioned on compliance to create additional incentives at the LEA-level to encourage substantial reform. That form of leverage may, in fact, be the most useful application of a terminal consequence for failing schools, as the success record for state takeovers, historically, has not been bright.

States Must Prepare for Legal and Political Resistance

The experience in several states also suggests that states taking an active role in restructuring should prepare for political and legal resistance to their actions. In Maryland, a plan to implement private management for several Baltimore schools resulted in the Baltimore Teachers' Association and the legislature suing to delay further implementation of the plan. In Massachusetts, the state legislature balked at provisions in new restructuring regulations that would have permitted a close-and-reopen "New Beginnings" strategy for schools where all other interventions had failed. In Virginia, the state Board of Education's efforts to increase state power over restructuring decisions had to pass both houses of the general assembly. These examples demonstrate that significant obstacles will likely accompany a strong state role. States adopting such roles must build the political will to overcome opposition and be prepared to defend the legality of their approach.

States Must Build Capacity and Increase Coherence

The experience in states like Alabama highlights the need for capacity-building efforts and the benefits of improving the coherence of state responses to restructuring mandates. Based on its prior experience with state-directed school restructuring, state officials decided that the state lacked the ability to sustain improvements at the school level without a strong local governance role. Their approach moved towards trying to provide the best possible assistance to LEAs as they undertake school restructuring efforts. Recognizing a lack of the capacity needed to support LEAs and the disconnectedness of many state servic-

es being provided to these schools and their communities, Alabama created the Accountability Roundtable, a board composed of members of each division in the state's Instructional Support Services department. This body created a task force that could collaborate across departments to provide the unique services each struggling school required. Reports from Alabama indicate that Roundtable members have incorporated an understanding of restructuring into their in-department activities, and they conduct their daily work with an awareness of the effect their actions have on school-level restructuring efforts.

Hawaii, on the other hand, is faced with an extraordinary capacity problem resulting from an unusually high percentage of schools in restructuring and the lack of local governance structures to undertake restructuring efforts. (The state has just one statewide school district.) Its response has been to contract with private service providers, who consult with schools to conduct reform efforts. As the number of restructuring schools in Hawaii continues to rise, state allotments for such private services have naturally increased. Recent comments from Hawaii officials suggest the state is beginning to confront the reality that the cost of this approach will be problematic as the scale of schools in restructuring continues to increase. If costs become untenable, Hawaii will have provided services without building capacity within the state school system to carry on the work.

These lessons represent some of the major trends in the states profiled. The individual state profiles that follow provide further insight into both the varied state responses to NCLB's regulatory requirements, as well as the elements needed to promote meaningful reform in chronically under-performing schools. They are meant to illuminate and expand upon the analysis in the report to which they are attached. All of the profiles offered here provide valuable lessons to state policy strategists, but we suggest particularly close attention to Arizona, Florida, Maryland, and Massachusetts. The experience in these states is most relevant to the framework for turnaround that is presented in the main report.

None of these policies will have much impact where they're needed most if states fail to match these "carrots" – flexible operating conditions, added capacity, increased resources – with the "stick" of an unpalatable consequence for inaction.

Alabama: Striving for Coherence

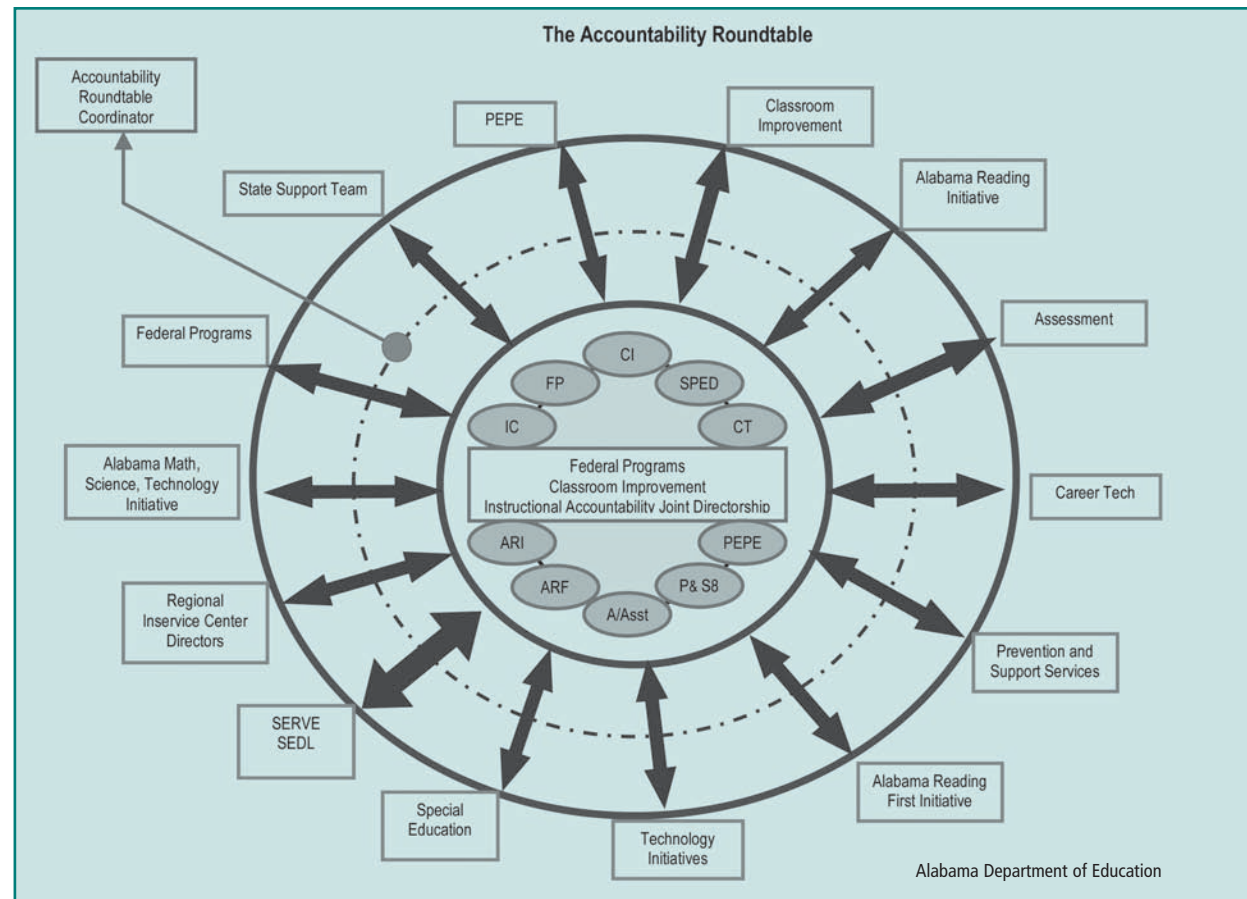
Alabama offers at least a partial lesson in how one state has attempted to end the “silo-izing” of its intervention effort, connecting it to multiple agencies that play support roles for schools and children. After less-than-successful efforts with failing school takeover, Alabama’s state education agency recognized a lack of capacity and coordination in the new restructuring process it was preparing to conduct. In response, officials created a new board to manage state restructuring efforts. Reports suggest that the board has been effective in solving the coordination problem. It has also improved state capacity by distributing restructuring knowledge throughout the agency. The result is a state entity that recognizes the centrality of restructuring efforts to all agency operations.

Traditionally Strong State Role in Education

Alabama has a history of strong state involvement in public schools, due to state constitutional limitations on the political power of local education agencies (LEAs), a high percentage of school costs being funded by the state, and a tradition of state level control.⁴ The strong centralized power in Alabama was evidenced by the state board of education taking over the financial operation of 13 school districts between 1995 and 2001. Yet, like states with less centralized power, Alabama has chosen to adopt a collaborative, coaching-based approach to school restructuring in the wake of No Child Left Behind. The approach was founded on the recognition that past state takeovers had not resulted in sustained change and that the state department of education, when initially faced with the prospect of intervening in schools as a result of No Child Left Behind, lacked institutional knowledge of school turnaround processes. The collaborative-coaching model was also thought to be an appropriate tool to support the state department of education’s stance that school improvement activities are relevant not only in the lowest performing schools, but for all schools in the state.

While primary authority for the creation and implementation of a school reform plan rests with LEAs, the state support team provides critical coaching and collaborative assistance throughout the planning and implementation stages. The state support team is composed of three primary actors: regional school improvement coaches, peer mentors, and school improvement specialists. LEA-hired school improvement specialists act as the coordinator of reform efforts, as well as a coach, providing ongoing professional development to instructors and leaders. Peer mentors are highly qualified “master” teachers loaned by LEAs to the state department of education. They serve as a source of

The Accountability Roundtable, Alabama’s model for coordinating the state support services for schools, includes members from each of the divisions within the state’s Instructional Support Services department. The Roundtable meets for four days per month to discuss how the state can address the needs of each restructuring school, and it provides a physical entity to which practitioners on the ground can address questions or concerns that arise while restructuring efforts are being conducted.



Alabama continued

intensive instructional capacity building, and serve under the direction of the state board and the school improvement specialists. Regional school improvement coaches work with districts containing under-performing schools in one of Alabama's 11 in-service regions to both help LEAs identify necessary reform interventions in each under-performing school and create an intervention plan. These regional support coaches serve as liaisons between LEAs and the state education agency by reporting the needs of an individual school or LEA to the Accountability Roundtable, the state body responsible for coordinating support services.

Like states with less centralized power, Alabama has chosen to adopt a collaborative, coaching-based approach to school restructuring in the wake of No Child Left Behind.

The Accountability Roundtable

In response to the looming need to intervene in schools created by No Child Left Behind and the lack of institutional knowledge about school improvement and turnaround processes at the state level, the Alabama Department of Education established the Accountability Roundtable (ART) in July 2005. The panel consists of one member from each of the divisions within the state's Instructional Support Services department,⁵ as well as representatives from the state Department of Education's Career and Technical Services and Technology Initiatives divisions. The stated purpose of the Roundtable is to provide seamless coordination of support services for restructuring schools at the state level.

The Roundtable currently meets four days per month to review information on school turnaround efforts provided by the regional school improvement coaches operating throughout the state. At these meetings, roundtable members discuss how each Instructional Support division may address the identified needs of a particular school or district. Individual Roundtable members then work with the regional school improvement coaches to ensure that appropriate technical assistance and other state services arrive at the school level. In this way, the Roundtable acts as a single conduit of school improvement

services and strategy, ensuring that all state-level school improvement efforts are coordinated.

While the Roundtable's key function is coordination of state services in response to defined local need, the Alabama experience suggests that the Roundtable is also valuable as a way to build capacity within the state department of education and foster a culture focused on school improvement and restructuring at the state level. During the Roundtable's first year, the panel met twice weekly to define the operational structure of state reform efforts, as well as build its internal capacity to assist restructuring schools. Roundtable members also acted as regional school improvement coaches during the first year of plan implementation. This experience provided members with an appreciation of how school improvement and restructuring operate at the local level. The knowledge gained through this experience was then utilized in the training Roundtable members conducted for the regional school improvement coaches who replaced them.

State officials point to other ancillary benefits of the Roundtable. The familiarity with restructuring gained by state officials helps focus divisional tasks on support of the lowest performing schools. Officials report that Roundtable members incorporate their experience on the panel into their everyday work, continuously considering how the actions of their division will impact reform efforts on the ground. A reverse accountability loop has also formed. LEAs that receive conflicting information from state officials have begun to report such conflicts to the ART, holding state officials accountable for coordination among departments and personnel. Such reverse accountability helps create a more efficient restructuring process.

Arizona: Local Efforts, State Leverage

A rizona’s effort to centralize power over restructuring efforts at the state level recognizes that without a state-based incentive structure, meaningful local reform is unlikely. The Arizona approach also recognizes that effective local efforts should not be disturbed. The result is a system of incentives designed to guarantee good-faith restructuring efforts at the local level, while ensuring that a lack of compliance will incite significant state intervention.

Strengthening State Control

Arizona has a three-tiered approach to state intervention in schools. To facilitate interventions, each school is placed in one of three categories: Prevention, School Improvement Assistance, or School Improvement Intervention. Schools are placed in these categories based on a combination of their performance in the Arizona state accountability system (Arizona LEARNS), their adequate yearly progress (AYP) status under No Child Left Behind, and feedback from state review teams in the field. Schools in Prevention status are the highest achieving schools and are provided with technical assistance, as well as focused

If the school is found negligent, the state board may direct the creation of alternate governance arrangements for the school. Governance may be assigned to an external partner, non-profit, or government entity.

support should they fail to meet AYP for the first time. Schools in the School Improvement Assistance tier receive capacity-building services from the state department of education as they plan for improvement and are subject to state monitoring. The lowest performing schools are subject to School Improvement Intervention and have their restructuring planning and implementation managed by the Arizona Department of Education.

Amendments to Arizona LEARNS identify the requirements placed upon the state to intervene in these lowest performing schools.⁶ Under the state accountability system, schools deemed “under-performing” for three years may be classified as schools

Arizona’s “Pressure-Points” to Spur Local Turnaround Initiative

Arizona is applying several forms of state-level pressure to try to ensure good-faith implementation of improvement and restructuring plans at the local level.

- **Firm deadlines with monetary sanctions:**
 - *Initial Improvement Plan:* State funds may be withheld for each day, over the allotted ninety, that a school fails to submit an improvement plan. Funds may also be withheld an additional 90 days as a penalty.
 - *Action Plans:* Schools that fail to submit “action plans” (which state how the school will use the recommendations of the state Solutions Team to reform its operation) within 45 days are subject to the withholding of ten percent of state funding.
- **State Department of Education on-site review:** Review of implementation measures results in a determination of whether the school should be labeled a “school failing to meet academic standards.”
- **Local Superintendent Testimony:** May be required by the state Board of Education when there is a belief that there has been a failure to adequately revise and implement improvement plans at the local level.
- **Public hearing:** May be held when there is state-level concern regarding the implementation of a school reform plan. Based on the findings of this hearing, the State Board may require partial or complete management by an external entity.
- **Ballot Message:** If more than five, or more than half, of a local education agency’s schools have been deemed “failing to meet academic standards” for more than two years, the ballot to elect members of the local Board of Education will read: *Within the last five years, [number of schools] schools in the school district have been designated as “schools failing to meet academic standards” by the superintendent of public instruction.*

“failing to meet academic standards.” Their classification is not automatic. It is dependent upon input from state-assigned review teams. Schools classified as “failing to meet academic standards” are subject to School Improvement Intervention. The

Arizona continued

state also has the option of intervening in any other school upon agreement with the local board of education.

Additional amendments to Arizona LEARNS have provided the state board of education even more extensive powers to restructure schools by empowering the board to request and hold a public hearing to determine whether any school in improvement status has been negligent in implementing its school improvement plan. If the school is found negligent, the state board may direct the creation of alternate governance arrangements for the school. Governance may be assigned to an external partner, non-profit, or government entity. The state also gained increased power over the contents of school improvement plans constructed while schools are in the “under-performing” category. The current state education administration will reportedly request further expansion of their power to influence school restructuring. This pro-

At the start of the 2006-2007 school year, Arizona identified 64 schools as “failing to meet academic standards.” This represents an approximately six-fold increase in the number of Arizona schools in the restructuring phase.

posed expansion would provide state officials the authority to withhold funding from school districts that “deliberately and substantially” ignore state education laws and shift accountability for the reform of under-performing schools from the building administrator to members of the local school board.⁷

Arizona’s “Solutions Teams”

Three-person units comprised of a master teacher, fiscal analyst, and a curriculum expert, all of whom have met the requirements of the state to be deemed Arizona Academic Standards Technicians,⁸ work in schools subject to School Improvement

Intervention. These “solutions teams” visit schools in both the School Improvement Assistance and School Improvement Intervention tiers. In School Improvement Assistance schools, the team assists with creation and implementation of a school improvement plan.⁹ Should the school again fail to meet state and federal standards the following year, the solutions team reviews the school’s actions before again implementing the improvement plan. The solutions team may recommend that the school be provided one last opportunity to make progress, or that it be labeled “failing to meet academic standards.”

Should the school be designated “failing to meet academic standards,” the solutions team conducts on-site, data-based inquiries. They attempt to identify existing school deficiencies, evaluate whether structures and conditions are in place to support implementation of a successful restructuring plan, and consider whether the state can provide any other assistance to further the reform effort. The solutions team makes recommendations regarding the school restructuring plan that are generally adopted by state officials. The Arizona Department of Education then assigns a school improvement coach to coordinate and oversee school restructuring. The school is also eligible to receive up to \$60,000 to implement the restructuring plan. The school improvement coach consults with the solutions team and implements their recommendations at the school. Schools that fail to improve their accountability designation face increasingly severe interventions, including removal of school leaders and faculty.

Compared to other states, Arizona has taken a fairly proactive stance towards state intervention in failing schools. However, at the start of the 2006-2007 school year, Arizona identified 64 schools as “failing to meet academic standards.” This represents an approximately six-fold increase in the number of Arizona schools in the restructuring phase. As these schools begin to undertake restructuring activities, the effectiveness and viability of Arizona’s approach to restructuring will face an increasingly difficult scale-up challenge.

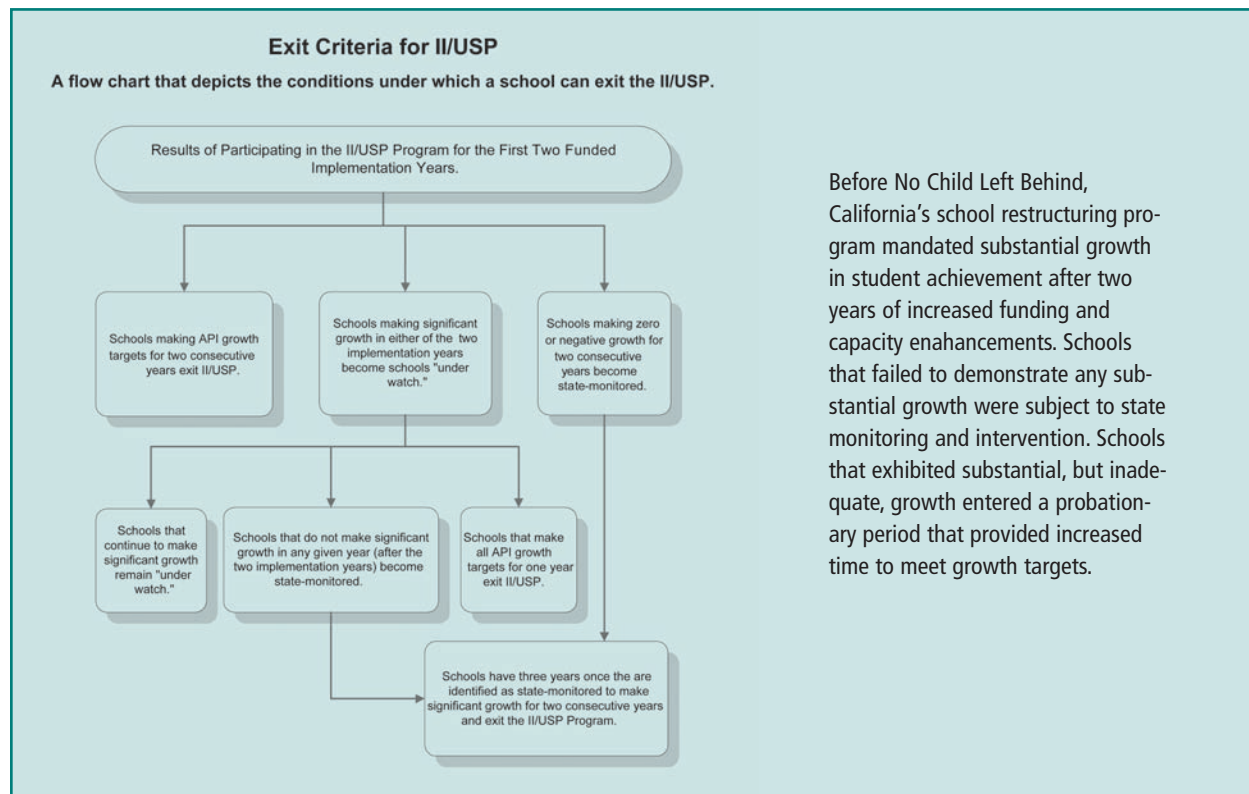
California: Uncertainty in the Face of Enormous Scale

California, which in 1999 enacted a system of significant state intervention in chronically under-performing schools, was forced to abandon this system in the wake of No Child Left Behind due to severe capacity concerns. Whereas the pre-No Child Left Behind system isolated the schools most in need of dramatic reform, the scaling up necessitated by No Child Left Behind caused these efforts to be de-emphasized. While the result has been nearly total reliance on local officials to conduct restructuring and little central oversight, the state continues to make efforts to intervene both financially and with support services in the neediest schools.

The Original Plan

In 1999, California adopted an approach to school turnaround known as the Immediate Intervention/Under-performing Schools Program (II/USP). Under that program, the state used the index calculation that was part of its accountability system to identify a subset of schools that would be eligible to apply for state grants to plan and implement restructuring.¹⁰ The state reserved the right to include schools that were eligible but did not apply. Terms of participation in the program were spelled out in legislation.¹¹ Each school included in the program received a \$50,000 grant to implement an audit and create a plan for restructuring based on the needs identified. The schools would then receive implementation grants of up to \$200 per student to hire external partners or implement reforms.

Schools included in the program were subject to increased state monitoring and the threat of more intrusive state reforms should adequate progress not be achieved and maintained within two years after implementation of the program. Schools that achieved adequate progress during this time were permitted to exit the program. Those achieving more marginal success (adequate achievement for one year or evidence of significant, though not yet adequate, gains) were provided a third year of funding to achieve the necessary level of performance. Schools



Before No Child Left Behind, California's school restructuring program mandated substantial growth in student achievement after two years of increased funding and capacity enhancements. Schools that failed to demonstrate any substantial growth were subject to state monitoring and intervention. Schools that exhibited substantial, but inadequate, growth entered a probationary period that provided increased time to meet growth targets.

failing to show significant progress were subject to state-controlled governance. The program thus operated in a multi-tiered manner and provided a system of self-selection that helped the state identify schools in which significant state action was necessary. While no definitive research on its impact is available, there are suggestions that the II/USP program had beneficial effects in some chronically under-performing schools.¹²

The Problem of Scale

No Child Left Behind significantly changed the scale of California's efforts. The state recognized the scale of intervention would be altered by two key factors. First, the AYP framework made it easier for schools to be identified for restructuring than

Facing the potential of large numbers of schools being identified for restructuring, . . . California denied restructuring schools the opportunity to request state takeover.

California continued

it had been under the II/USP program. Second, the II/USP program had built-in mechanisms to cap and control the number of schools that could participate, while No Child Left Behind contained no such controls. Facing the potential of large numbers of schools being identified for restructuring in the years following No Child Left Behind's implementation, California denied restructuring schools the opportunity to request state takeover and chose not to incorporate the II/USP program into its No Child Left Behind accountability plan.

During the 2005-2006 school year, 401 California schools were in either the planning or implementation stages of restructuring. Entering the 2006-2007 school year, this number jumped about 75 percent, to 701 schools.

The anticipated scale problems have become a reality in California. The state has experienced dramatic growth in the number of schools planning or implementing restructuring under No Child Left Behind. During the 2005-2006 school year, 401 California schools were in either the planning or implementation stages of restructuring. Entering the 2006-2007 school year, this number jumped about 75 percent, to 701 schools.¹³ With a substantial increase in annual measurable objectives (the cut points determining what constitutes adequate progress under No Child Left Behind) built into California's accountability system next year, this growth is likely to continue.

In response to the challenges of scale, California has changed course dramatically, adopting an approach to restructuring that focuses heavily on local control of school turnaround efforts. In fact, California does not require state approval of restructuring plans and provides technical assistance to local education

agencies only regarding the procedural considerations of devising a restructuring plan. Thus, the state does not provide input on or retain control over the content of the restructuring plan.

Recognizing the struggles of the state's lowest performing schools and local education agencies to enact meaningful turnaround plans, California established two programs more recently that will increase assistance to a select group of schools and districts. As part of the settlement of a school funding lawsuit, 500 of the lowest performing schools in the state will be provided a share of a \$2.9 billion fund the state has agreed to supply as compensation for past under-funding of education. A list of approximately 1,500 schools will be eligible to apply for inclusion in the program. The decision to limit the receiving schools to 500 was made to ensure that the funds would have significant impact in at least a subset of schools. The schools selected will receive grants over a seven-year period, according to the following formula: annual payments of \$500 per pupil from kindergarten through grade 3; \$900 from grades 4 through 8, and \$1,000 for grades 9 through 12. A second program, funded by a \$15.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will provide 15 local education agencies with intervention teams to undertake restructuring efforts in their schools. The purpose of this program is to increase local education agency capacity to effectively turn around their lowest performing schools.

While California appears to be seeking creative ways to funnel additional resources to its most challenged local education agencies and schools, it is important to note that state officials have not been able to apply such programs across the board due to increasing capacity concerns. Indeed, such capacity and scale concerns have essentially dictated the adoption of the somewhat watered-down approach to school restructuring that California has implemented.

Florida: Pressuring Districts for More Proactive Turnaround

Concerned with the pace and intensity of reforms at the local level, Florida state education officials decided to take aggressive action to guarantee more proactive restructuring in the state's lowest-performing schools. Since the state had already publicly dismissed state takeover as an option, it was forced to develop creative ways to pressure LEAs. Intense pressure from the State Department of Education combined with publicity and symbolic financial sanctions are now acting as a catalyst to incite personnel and conditions change in these schools.

SWAT Teams for Failing Schools

The Florida Department of Education assigns each school in the state a grade from "A" to "F"¹⁴ as part of its A+ Plan for Education accountability system. School grades are the fulcrum for a system of rewards and sanctions. Schools that receive an A grade or whose grade improves significantly earn both financial rewards (up to \$100 per student) and public recognition. Schools receiving grades of D or F and schools that failed to make AYP must develop school improvement plans and undertake other mandated actions outlined on a grade-based differentiated school improvement rubric.¹⁵ Schools categorized by Florida's system are simultaneously subject to the requirements of No Child Left Behind, including requirements for offering public school choice and supplemental education services.

Assistance Plus, Florida's program for improving under-performing schools, provides technical assistance, capacity building measures, and increased funding to the lowest performing schools in the state (those receiving Ds or Fs). Technical assistance and capacity building are provided by School-wide Assistance Teams (SWAT), full-time school improvement liaisons, reading coaches, and formative assessment tools. The SWAT teams are composed of state-approved "high performing" educators who provide coaching, leadership development, and other school-level strategic interventions focused on

State Imposed Requirements for Repeat "F" Schools Staffing

- Require teachers to reapply for their jobs
- Differentiate pay for highly effective teachers
- Hire proven educational leaders
- Employ safety and attendance personnel

Oversight

- Establish committee of community members to oversee reforms
- Document aggressive efforts to enroll students in choice and supplemental services
- Document good faith implementation of reading plan
- Report monthly progress

Student Support

- Provide intensive support to students retaking graduation exam
- Establish extended day programs for academic credit recovery
- Employ reading and math coaches for each grade
- Make contractual guarantees to entering ninth grade students

Florida has created an extensive list of required reforms in schools that repeatedly fall short of state standards, including those listed at left. The intrusive interventions affect school staffing, increase student support, and impose added oversight. These required interventions have been used to both change conditions in under-performing schools and increase incentives for LEAs to reform before the state intervenes.

improving the instructional and leadership capacity of teachers and school administrators. Like coaching programs in many states, the SWAT program's goal is to establish links between the state's most effective instructors and its highest-need schools. Low-performing schools in Florida are also provided

Schools that receive repeated F grades are subject to a state-imposed action plan that lists 26 school reform measures that must be undertaken by the LEA. Included in these state mandates are requirements that all instructional staff re-apply for their jobs.

Florida continued

with a school improvement liaison and are eligible to receive increased funding as part of their participation in Assistance Plus, with the state providing \$1,000 per student to help increase fiscal capacity at the school level.

26 Requirements for Change

While Florida's structure for intervening in under-performing schools is similar to that of other states, it is the bold action the state has taken to change conditions and personnel in chronically under-performing schools that makes the state's approach unique. Schools that receive repeated F grades are subject to a state-imposed action plan that lists 26 school reform measures

The board threatened to withhold discretionary funding and superintendent pay from the non-compliant LEAs. When two LEAs resisted, the state reduced monthly assistance by an amount equal to the superintendent's salary.

that must be undertaken by the LEA.¹⁶ Included in these state mandates are requirements that all instructional staff re-apply for their jobs; that the LEA provide professional development opportunities; and that the LEA implement differentiated and performance-based pay. In addition, the LEA must supply reading and math coaches, assure that high performing teachers are teaching the lowest performing students, draft explicit contracts with parents indicating how student achievement will be improved, and hire school leaders who have proven that they can turn around schools (by having brought a D or F school to an A or B grade) to run the failing school.

The state reform mandates also require that these schools be assigned a Community Assessment Team charged with recommending school-specific reform measures.¹⁷ This team is com-

posed of a department representative, parents, business representatives, educators, representatives of local governments, and community activists. The Community Assessment Team reviews three years of data from the school and makes recommendations to the state board of education outlining specific reform measures it deems necessary for effective school turnaround to occur. The failing school is required to implement these reforms. The team continuously monitors the school's performance for signs of improvement and reports monthly to the state department of education concerning the school's progress.

To date, the state board of education has taken action against seven LEAs housing schools identified as repeat, or chronic, "F" schools.¹⁸ The state board defined compliance as full implementation of all 26 mandates, and during the 2006-2007 school year it took bold action when it grew frustrated with a lack of compliance.¹⁹ The state first increased its presence in the schools by sending in state review teams every two weeks to monitor reform activities and file progress reports. The board threatened to withhold discretionary funding and superintendent pay from the non-compliant LEAs. When two LEAs resisted, the state reduced monthly assistance by an amount equal to the superintendent's salary.²⁰

While the withholding of funds in this instance was largely symbolic, the threat of withholding more and the attention generated by the action resulted in increased compliance and, eventually, negotiated compromises between the state and LEAs. The approach appears to have been effective, particularly in light of the state's clear stance that it would not take over schools. The steps taken by state officials re-established an incentive for compliance in a manner unique among the states we studied. Such an approach might serve as a model for using the threat of monetary sanctions instead of governance change to elicit serious steps toward reform at the local level.

Hawaii: Experimenting with Outside Providers

In Hawaii, ambitious state learning standards and a challenging student population have contributed to an extremely high rate of schools identified for restructuring. This has created added pressure in a state with few local governance structures as a result of its statewide, single-district system. These unique pressures have resulted in a strategy to rely solely on outside providers that, as in other states, is now in jeopardy because of the number of schools in the accountability pipeline.

Unique Circumstances, Unique Approach

Hawaii has been plagued by large numbers of schools failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. In 2005, 66 percent of Hawaii's schools failed to make AYP. Hawaii is also the state with the highest rate of schools entering restructuring under No Child Left Behind, with 24 of the state's approximately 280 schools (8.5 percent) identified for restructuring during the 2005-2006 school year, and 53 (18.9 percent) in 2006-2007.²¹ Some studies attributed these high failure rates to Hawaii's achievement standards, which are among the most rigorous in the nation. Other theories suggested that Hawaii's large immigrant population translates into an increased number of limited-English proficient subgroups failing to make AYP. The massive issue of scale facing school reform in Hawaii is compounded by Hawaii's unique statewide system structure. This school governance system places increased pressure on the state department of education to take an active role in school improvement and restructuring.

The Hawaii Board of Education responded to the capacity concerns raised by these unique circumstances by approving contracts with three private entities: Edison Alliance, ETS Pulliam, and the National Center on Education and the Economy (and its America's Choice program) in May 2005. The contracts established that these organizations would act as the assistance providers (without total governance authority) for particular schools that had been identified for restructuring. These agreements represented a state commitment of approximately \$7.9 million to restructure 20 under-performing schools during the

The Plan has 3 goals:

IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH STANDARDS-BASED EDUCATION

1

All students proficient or better in the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards is a priority. Equally important are the General Learner Outcomes or valued learner behaviors that are nurtured along with the standards—students communicating effectively, engaging in complex thinking and problem solving, producing quality products, being responsible for one's own learning, using technology ethically, and working well with others.

PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

2

Providing the most appropriate learning environment to enhance student learning is imperative. Learning environments also must be conducive and responsible for two other student priorities: civic responsibility—developing future citizens capable of preserving democracy, and safety and well being—basic expectations when parents send their child off to school. Supports to ensure the social, emotional and physical well-being of all students are in place. The challenge is to connect students who are not achieving to the appropriate services and support they need to learn and thrive.

CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY

3

Schools engage in all aspects of standards-based education to ensure student learning. Integral to the process are frequent and varied balanced assessments that allow students to demonstrate their growing mastery of the standards. Standards-based education also raises the bar for the system. Everyone engages in planning and implementation, uses data and evidence to continuously assess and improve products and services, and is encouraged to fully utilize, and where possible maximize, resources. Becoming a successful, service-oriented system requires a climate dedicated to meeting shareholder or customer needs. Thus customer satisfaction is emphasized throughout this plan.

[Excerpt from Hawaii's plan for school intervention]

Hawaii continued

2005-2006 school year.²² Both the NCEE/America's Choice and Edison Alliance contracts contained seven schools, while the ETS Pulliam contract included six. The number of schools eventually increased to 24, though education officials indicated that the cost of the contracts increased only slightly due to the inclu-

State officials had to decide whether to renew the restructuring contracts before having access to achievement data that would by law dictate whether the schools in question had to continue to be restructured.

providers has been seen by some as conflicting with Act 51, an education reform measure passed in 2004, which sought to decentralize school management. Overhead costs were high due to expenses associated with each private firm establishing operations in Hawaii. Though this was a one-time expense, it greatly increased the state costs. Moreover, the seamless delivery of services between school years meant that renewal of school management contracts with the private service providers had to precede the release of achievement data and accountability determinations. In essence, state officials had to decide whether to renew the restructuring contracts before having access to achievement data that would by law dictate whether the schools in question had to continue to be restructured.

These issues notwithstanding, early results from the partner-led interventions show some improvement in achievement. Concerns about scale, however, have caused Hawaii officials to consider carefully the future of the state's restructuring program. Projected increases in the number of schools entering restructuring have prompted discussion about the cost of the restructuring services. One official indicated her belief that the system was slowly moving toward a scenario in which *all* Hawaii schools would enter the restructuring phase.²³ While Hawaii officials insist that expenditures have not yet exceeded federal allotments, the reality of a continuously growing number of restructuring schools has prompted consideration by the state of building some internal school restructuring capacity.

SYSTEMWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF HAWAII CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

- Standards establish high expectations for all students
- Clear, concise, and user-friendly standards
- Coherent content and performance standards
- Standards reflect important skills, dispositions, and abilities
- Common understanding and support of standards by the community

QUALITY CURRICULUM

- Curriculum is based on HCPS
- Curriculum is relevant, challenging, and meaningful

STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING

QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- State and classroom assessments are based on HCPS
- Performance-based or criterion-based assessments
- Assessment data used to improve curriculum and instruction

QUALITY INSTRUCTION

- Meets the diverse needs and learning styles of students
- Engages students in industry and problem solving

Hawaii Board of Education

sion of significant startup and relocation costs included in the original contracts. Entering the 2006-2007 school year, the number of schools requiring restructuring rose to 53, and the state anticipated paying upwards of \$15 million to the private entities to provide similar services to the newly identified schools.

Concerns Over Implementation

Several complicating factors – some unique to the state – have impacted Hawaii's restructuring strategy. The use of the outside

Maryland: Caught in Political Cross-fire

Maryland, which has chosen an aggressive, highly targeted turnaround strategy, has been handcuffed by political and legal opposition to its closely-watched intervention in Baltimore's public schools. Maryland's experience suggests that a state education agency's will to conduct comprehensive turnaround is not enough. Political will must reach a certain critical mass for the reform effort to endure and thrive.

An Activist Approach

In 1993, Maryland established a school accountability system that included a two-tiered school reconstitution framework.²⁴ Under the plan, schools that consistently underperformed on state assessments would be placed on the state's "watch list." These schools would also become eligible for reconstitution. The system called for local school boards to take over governance of the school during the first tier of the reconstitution process.²⁵ The plan also allowed the state to take over schools that failed to respond to local interventions.

When the state legislature moved to pass legislation delaying any potential state takeovers for one year, ... state officials argued that No Child Left Behind essentially required such efforts by the state.

Though forward thinking in adopting state takeover policies, it was not until 2000 that the state acted to take over schools under the plan. It took over governance of three chronically under-performing elementary schools in Baltimore. Rather than reconstitute the schools, the state board opted to contract their management out to an external partner, Edison Schools, beginning in July of that year. While Edison continues to manage the schools, the state's takeover actions have encountered a fair amount of political and legal wrangling.

The Baltimore Teachers Union challenged the state board's authority to take over schools, seemingly as a means of protecting members' jobs in the affected schools. Ultimately, the Maryland Court of Appeals ruled that the state board of education may not have had the authority to enact the regulations that established state takeover power, but subsequent action by the state legisla-



Maryland State Department of Education

ture retroactively approved such authority. In addition to legal challenges to state authority to take over schools, the efficacy of hiring a private, for-profit contractor to run the schools in question has been hotly debated. The academic outcomes of the schools have been followed closely, and while the results have been subject to conflicting interpretations, they appear positive relative to district performance in the same time period. The cost-efficiency of using Edison has also been part of the public debate. One study found that using Edison was significantly more expensive than if a government agency continued to provide the service.²⁶ Criticism of the contract was based on Edison's profit, the high rate spending on administration, and other factors that, in the eyes of the authors, deserved further exploration.

Maryland continued

Pressure to Weaken State Policy

Maryland was able to enact the school restructuring provisions of No Child Left Behind rather seamlessly because the law's provisions were closely aligned with its own system. State education officials essentially maintained the same approach as had been adopted in the 1990s, but adopted a new assessment system and used the AYP formula to determine when schools should be placed on watch and subsequently restructured. Maryland reserved the right, as it had done in the past, to intervene in schools that failed to make progress after local restructuring efforts had been adopted.

Ultimately, the legislature did pass legislation preventing the state from taking over the additional schools. The result has been an increased emphasis on restructuring at the local level, where the approaches taken have been less dramatic than the state would like.

Maryland currently has 79 schools in restructuring. The state provides eight choices for local approaches to school restructuring:

- ▶ Employ a private management company to govern the school
- ▶ Convert to a charter school
- ▶ Convert to a quasi-charter school
- ▶ Replace school staff
- ▶ District takeover
- ▶ Reopen as a “school of choice”
- ▶ Implement an external reform model, or
- ▶ Employ a turnaround specialist to provide input on school reform and governance.²⁷

Nearly three-quarters of Maryland's restructuring schools have chosen to hire a turnaround specialist (46 of 63 schools that have adopted new governance procedures have chosen this option). A majority of the remaining schools have adopted a “zero-basing” approach that requires all school staff to re-apply for their positions. Again, both of these approaches have been met with controversy. Critics suggest that the turnaround specialist approach has been rendered ineffective by implementation at the local level: a lack of authority that has resulted in the specialists acting more like part-time consultants than a new, shared-governance structure.²⁸ The state has acknowledged its discontent with such implementation. The effectiveness of “zero-basing” as the sole turnaround strategy has also been questioned.²⁹ Criticism of both approaches has centered in part on the lack of comprehensiveness in their design and execution.

In light of these local restructuring difficulties, state education officials have maintained that state-level takeovers have been more effective and sought to take over 11 more schools in early 2006. When the state legislature moved to pass legislation delaying any potential state takeovers for one year (a move designed to provide time to search for other approaches), state officials argued that No Child Left Behind essentially required such efforts by the state. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education sent a warning letter suggesting that such an action by the state legislature would contradict the requirements of No Child Left Behind and could result in loss of federal funding. Ultimately, the legislature did pass legislation preventing the state from taking over the additional schools.³⁰ The result has been an increased emphasis on restructuring at the local level, where the approaches taken have been less dramatic than the state would like.

Massachusetts: Seeking to Set Standards for Turnaround

Massachusetts, after a history of “light-touch” guidance for its under-performing schools, began to intervene more substantially in 2005-2006 in three middle schools. Impatient with the pace and progress of improvement in its lowest-performing schools, the state board of education passed new regulations late in 2006 that now require schools reaching “Commonwealth Priority” status to meet unambiguous criteria in their turnaround plans. The criteria insist, for example, that principals have “authority to select and assign staff to positions in the school without regard to seniority.” Massachusetts is also experimenting with a second form of conditions-change, through a Commonwealth Pilot initiative that allows restructuring schools to gain extensive authority over staff, schedule, budget, and program if they can meet even stiffer criteria for change. Most recently, the state has sought to address the scale issue by identifying and working directly with nine “Commissioner’s Districts” that collectively represent the majority of all Restructuring and Corrective Action schools in the state. These new efforts have no track record yet, but collectively they make the Commonwealth one of the states worth watching.

Under these regulations, LEAs must provide the building administrator of the Commonwealth Priority School the power to control staffing and a degree of building-level budgetary power.

Shortening the Review Process

Prior to the adoption of new regulations, the state had a lengthy review process for analysis of under-performing schools. (Some observers believe it remains quite lengthy today.) Schools that performed poorly on accountability measures were reviewed by a specially trained group from the Department of Education. If the school was deemed to be in need of assistance, it would then be

audited by a state-appointed panel to gather evidence that would inform the Commissioner’s determination of whether the school would be labeled “under-performing.” The five-member panels included state officials, education consultants, and school-based practitioners. Schools that were in corrective action or restructuring were prioritized for such reviews, as were schools that had poor (“very low” or “critically low”) performance ratings and exhibited no progress on state assessments.³¹ The panel’s findings were the key factor in determining whether a school would be designated as chronically under-performing, which would trigger more vigorous state intervention.

Once a school was determined to be under-performing, it was given assistance through a state improvement specialist to design a reform plan, along with \$25,000 to implement the plan. The school would then be given two years to work on the plan and show significant improvement in student outcomes. If no progress was seen during this period, the state Commissioner could recommend that the Board of Education deem the school “chronically under-performing.” Such a designation is akin to state takeover, with the state gaining the right to appoint a principal and make decisions regarding whether to retain staff and reform the curriculum. The state first took such action with one middle school during the 2004-2005 school year – seven years after its first failure to meet AYP.³² It subsequently took action with two more middle schools during the 2005-2006 school year.³³ The state received some criticism during implementation of the first intervention process for a perceived lack of willingness to take more dramatic action in consistently poor-performing schools.

A New Process, with New Requirements

The state Board of Education, desiring more expedited state support for under-performing schools, passed new regulations in October 2006, which streamlined the state intervention process.³⁴ The expedited services were achieved by eliminating the multiple

stages of review that accompanied determinations of school status in the accountability framework. Rather than requiring a panel review and state Board of Education review to designate an “under-performing” school, the new regulations require only that a school fail to make AYP in the same subject for four years. Rather than “under-performing” – a label that caused some consternation in the field – these schools will now be called “Commonwealth Priority Schools.” The designation initiates a 30-day period during which the superintendent and school board of the LEA must undertake a needs assessment and report

This option... embraces the need for fundamental changes in operating conditions identified in the main report, including authority over five areas: staff, schedule, budget, curriculum, and governance.

their findings to the state. Local officials are then granted six months to create a reform plan that aims to achieve AYP in the subject matter in question within two years.

The new regulations spell out specific requirements that must be included in the reform plan to satisfy the regulations. (See box.) Under these regulations, LEAs must provide the building administrator of the Commonwealth Priority School the power to control staffing and a degree of building-level budgetary power. The school must also be provided with at least two subject-area coaches in reading and mathematics and must have both interim assessments and an opportunity for teachers to consult with one another regarding student progress. Periodic review of staff is also required. In addition, LEAs are strongly encouraged to consider using an external management partner

and may consider becoming a charter school. During the school’s time as a Commonwealth Priority School, it is entitled to priority in terms of state funding, technical assistance, and external resources.

The plan is submitted to the state Board of Education, which has the power to amend it. The Board then issues an order outlining the reform that is to take place at the school level. Failure to comply with the order can result in the withholding of funds or designation of the LEA as “chronically under-performing,” which subjects it to state receivership. (The Board had the option to defer such action while the improvements were being put in place, and did so on many occasions—granting schools as many as three extra years before declarations of “chronically under-performing.”) During the reform implementation period, schools can terminate the Commonwealth Priority School designation by making AYP in both reading and mathematics (as long as they are not in restructuring under NCLB), or by request, if they have failed to make AYP but exhibited significant progress.³⁵ Exit from the program is subject to state Board of Education approval. If such progress has not been made within two years of becoming a Commonwealth Priority School, the Board has the option to intervene and declare the school chronically under-performing, as it did in the prior scheme, and implement the same state alternative-governance option. (More specific language on this option, which at one point was called “New Beginnings” schools, was removed from the regulations out of concern that the legislature might view this as overstepping the restructuring authority granted the Board under the state’s 1993 Education Reform Act.)

The result of the new regulations is an expedited timeframe and reduction in state discretion at the earliest stages of the process for reforming the state’s lowest performing schools. The reforms have also provided stronger accountability for LEAs

implementing school-level reforms and – importantly – a strong set of requirements for turnaround plan design (see box at right). The biggest hurdle for the state now is funding; the Department of Education requested \$30 million in targeted assistance in the 2008 budget, but received just a third of that amount, leaving its ability to implement the initiative in doubt.

In 2007, the state added an additional element to its restructuring strategies. The first four schools to come before the Board for a decision on being named “chronically under-performing” were given the opportunity to apply for Commonwealth Pilot School status. This option, based on the Boston Public Schools’ Pilot School model (a kind of in-district charter status created by the BPS and its union in the late 1990s), embraces the need for fundamental changes in operating conditions identified in the main report, including authority over five areas: staff, schedule, budget, curriculum, and governance. The option places significant control in the hands of district and school leaders, as long as their “Co-Pilot” plan meets the state’s turnaround-plan criteria and gets sign-off from the union and 80% of the school’s teachers. All four of the schools (two middle schools, two high schools) applied for and received Co-Pilot status; it was clear that their incentive to do so was driven in large part by a desire to avoid the chronically under-performing label and a more intrusive, state-led intervention.

More recently, the DOE has focused on a new system of support that emphasizes the district as the main vehicle for engineering turnaround – along the lines of the ten “essential conditions” – at the scale required. The challenge will lie in providing sufficiently intensive support to match the intensity of the turnaround vision outlined by those conditions, within a tight fiscal environment.

Massachusetts’ Ten Essential Conditions

These ten requirements form the basis of Massachusetts’ new turnaround policy, passed in October 2006. Schools entering “Priority” status in the state (following four years of failure to make AYP) must submit restructuring plans that incorporate these ten elements. With the budget allocation for the initiative in FY2008 providing less than a third of the DOE’s request, however, the state faces a challenge in fully implementing the plan.

- 1) The school’s principal has authority to select and assign staff to positions in the school without regard to seniority;
- 2) The school’s principal has control over financial resources necessary to successfully implement the school improvement plan;
- 3) The school is implementing curricula that are aligned to state frameworks in core academic subjects;
- 4) The school implements systematically a program of interim assessments (4-6 times per year) in English language arts and mathematics that are aligned to school curriculum and state frameworks;
- 5) The school has a system to provide detailed tracking and analysis of assessment results and uses those results to inform curriculum, instruction and individual interventions;
- 6) The school schedule for student learning provides adequate time on a daily and weekly basis for the delivery of instruction and provision of individualized support as needed in English language arts and math, which for students not yet proficient is presumed to be at least 90 minutes per day in each subject;
- 7) The school provides daily after-school tutoring and homework help for students who need supplemental instruction and focused work on skill development;
- 8) The school has a least two full-time subject-area coaches, one each for English language arts/reading and for mathematics, who are responsible to provide faculty at the school with consistent classroom observation and feedback on the quality and effectiveness of curriculum delivery, instructional practice, and data use;
- 9) School administrators periodically evaluate faculty, including direct evaluation of applicable content knowledge and annual evaluation of overall performance tied in part to solid growth in student learning and commitment to the school’s culture, educational model, and improvement strategy;
- 10) The weekly and annual work schedule for teachers provides adequate time for regular, frequent, department and/or grade-level faculty meetings to discuss individual student progress, curriculum issues, instructional practice, and school-wide improvement efforts. As a general rule no less than one hour per week shall be dedicated to leadership-directed, collaborative work, and no fewer than 5 days per year, or hours equivalent thereto, when teachers are not responsible for supervising or teaching students, shall be dedicated to professional development and planning activities directed by school leaders.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

Michigan: Seeking Deeper Impact in Restructuring Schools

Michigan was one of the first states to have schools reach the end of the reforms dictated by No Child Left Behind. That end-point has proved problematic because of the state's reluctance to define consequences (including alternative governance) for schools that move through the NCLB timeline without improving. When its first set of under-performing schools "aged out" of the No Child Left Behind timeline, the state was left to determine what consequences should follow. Faced with growing public concern over the schools' failure to turn around, Michigan education officials have struggled to chart a course for the future.

The state's experience serves as an example of the dynamic that can result from a lack of real incentives – both positive and sanction-oriented – to drive local proactivity in restructuring schools.

A Long Head Start

Michigan has a high percentage of schools in restructuring.³⁷ During the 2005 school year, Michigan's total of 99 schools implementing restructuring was the fifth highest in the nation. That high rate of schools in restructuring in Michigan is less likely a product of actual school characteristics than a reflection on Michigan's retroactive implementation of No Child Left Behind accountability.³⁸ Michigan had been fully in compliance with the Improving America's Schools Act, the precursor to No Child Left Behind, and thus took school performance prior to passage of No Child Left Behind into account when making initial AYP determinations.

Michigan has stressed an individualized approach and closely reviewed LEA-created plans to ensure that they complied with both No Child Left Behind and Michigan mandates and clearly define the steps needed to restructure a school. State officials have created a list of options for schools in restructuring and left the planning decisions to LEA officials. The state does not allow state takeover as an option.

Coaches to Build Capacity

The one option Michigan education officials added to the default choices for restructuring was using academic coaches to build capacity at the local level. A collaborative group, the Alliance for

Building Capacity in Schools (ABCS), has been grant-funded by the state to be the sole entity to select and train academic coaches.³⁹ The program stresses the role of coaches in building the capacity of local officials to make decisions regarding restructuring plans, and not imposing external judgments about the content of such plans. While there are approximately 80 coaches currently available to assist LEAs, the use of coaches is strictly optional, and they have been only moderately popular. It is estimated that coaches have been employed in 17 percent of eligible schools.⁴⁰

Michigan also employs three other capacity building mechanisms. First, the state department of education provides grants of up to \$45,000 to LEAs with schools in restructuring to fund restructuring activities. The state has stressed that receipt of this money is contingent on close adherence to an approved restructuring plan, though there is no evidence they have actually withheld funds from an LEA based on non-compliance with state restructuring mandates. Second, the state provides a toolkit for schools entering the sanctions phase under No Child Left Behind that provides guidance concerning evaluation of school deficiencies and planning for restructuring. Finally, the state provides LEAs with direct technical assistance, such as data analysis and teacher training.

Local Empowerment vs. Requirements for Achievement

Michigan's approach to school restructuring has been limited due to capacity concerns and a belief that school restructuring is a highly individualized process that should be locally directed. The state has merely attempted to ensure that LEAs make sound restructuring decisions.⁴¹ This approach has placed the state in the difficult position of having to address the growing problem of schools that are unresponsive to restructuring. As of 2006-7, the state had seven schools that have reached years six and seven of improvement status, a rarity since No Child Left Behind has only been in operation for five years. Michigan has responded to this problem by creating a "critical list" of the lowest performing (and most unresponsive to reform) schools in the state. The state Department of Education has provided grants to fund the

Michigan's Standards for School Improvement

Strand I	Strand II	Strand III	Strand IV	Strand V
Teaching for learning	Leadership	Personnel & Professional Learning	School & Community Relations	Data & Information Management
Standards (12) and Benchmarks (26)				
1. Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned, Reviewed & Monitored • Communicated 2. Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Delivery 3. Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned to Curriculum and Instruction • Data Reporting and Use 	1. Instructional Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Program • Instructional Support 2. Shared Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Culture & Climate • Continuous Improvement 3. Operational Resource Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Allocation • Operational Management 	1. Personnel Qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements • Skills, Knowledge, Dispositions 2. Professional Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Content & Pedagogy • Alignment 	1. Parent/Family Involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Engagement 2. Community Involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Engagement 	1. Data Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Generation, Identification & Collection • Data Accessibility • Data Support 2. Information Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis & Interpretation • Applications

At left: the standards and benchmarks that make up Michigan's School Improvement Framework. The Framework is the basic organizing tool provided by the state that districts use to create improvement plans for under-performing schools.

Michigan Department of Education

use of specially trained teams to conduct program audits and provide year-long technical assistance to the “critical” schools. The schools are also required to employ a turnaround specialist to coordinate reform efforts.

The challenge of turning around the most chronically under-performing schools in Michigan has not been solved – though the state has been able to move a number of schools out of its Restructuring category over the past two years. Michigan is caught between its desire to avoid taking over schools and its need to take some action that will create meaningful reform for those schools that have “aged out” of No Child Left Behind. State officials directing school improvement and restructuring programs have unsuccessfully sought guidance from the federal gov-

ernment. Michigan officials expressly reject the notion that they want to close the unresponsive schools and have indicated that they prefer not to transform them into charter schools. Still, the two plans that have been most recently considered by Michigan officials would do essentially that. The first plan would call for the state to “recommend” that the schools be closed. A second would create “hybrid charter” schools that would be governed by “takeover trustees” and would free the schools from the restraints of prior collective bargaining agreements. No matter which approach Michigan chooses, the state’s experience serves as an example of the dynamic that can result from a lack of strong incentives – both positive and sanction-oriented – to drive local proactivity in restructuring schools.

Ohio: Moving Closer to Active Intervention

Ohio traditionally had been a prime example of a “hands-off” state in regard to school restructuring. The state has been careful to emphasize that it plays no part in the restructuring decision-making process conducted at the LEA level, though it does provide technical assistance. Enactment of a new policy that establishes the state’s ability to take corrective action in LEAs that fail to improve student performance is further evidence of growing national impatience over the pace and impact of these fairly passive intervention strategies. Even strong local-control states such as Ohio are beginning to recognize the need to insist, at the state level, on more proactive and comprehensive restructuring.

The District as Locus of School Intervention

Since the late 1980s, Ohio law has required that districts undertake school interventions to bring low-performing students up to grade level. This tradition of district-centered interventions has continued, with the Ohio legislature amending requirements

Ohio has not sought to approve, or even collect, restructuring and improvement plans due to a belief that plans are the legal property of the district.

placed on districts to intervene in schools six times between 1992 and 2004. The state has traditionally avoided school-level interventions, and has few significant provisions for monitoring district compliance with intervention requirements. In the few instances that the Ohio Department of Education has intervened in school operations, its successes have almost exclusively been around fiscal turnaround measures, not meaningful academic turnarounds.⁴² As a result, the state has been reluctant to take on academic turnaround responsibilities. These traditional roles have been challenged by the requirements of No Child Left Behind, but the state has continued to balance compliance with a tradition of district-based school intervention.

The Ohio Department of Education has maintained an intentional distance from school-level restructuring activities. Rather than intervene directly, the state has adopted the Statewide System of School Improvement Support, which provides technical assistance and coaching of various intensities to local education agencies.⁴³ The degree of state-provided services is determined according to a three-tiered structure that provides the most intense services to districts in improvement status or that have schools in improvement or restructuring status. Districts containing at-risk schools receive less intense, periodic services. The system also provides universal information and school improvement tools to all districts, regardless of their status.

Each district employs a District Leadership Team charged with planning and implementing school restructuring.⁴⁴ The state department of education funds 12 Regional School Improvement Teams (RSITs) to provide districts with coaching and technical assistance in data analysis, research-based best practices, focused planning, implementation and monitoring, high quality professional development, and resource management. All restructuring and improvement plans are created and finalized by the District Leadership Team, and the RSITs work with the team to ensure that reform plans are based on data and research. The nature of this interaction is limited to the encouragement of strengthening an improvement or restructuring plan and never constitutes approval or denial of the district-adopted plan. Ohio has not sought to approve, or even collect, restructuring and improvement plans due to a belief that plans are the legal property of the district.

Toward Greater State Intervention

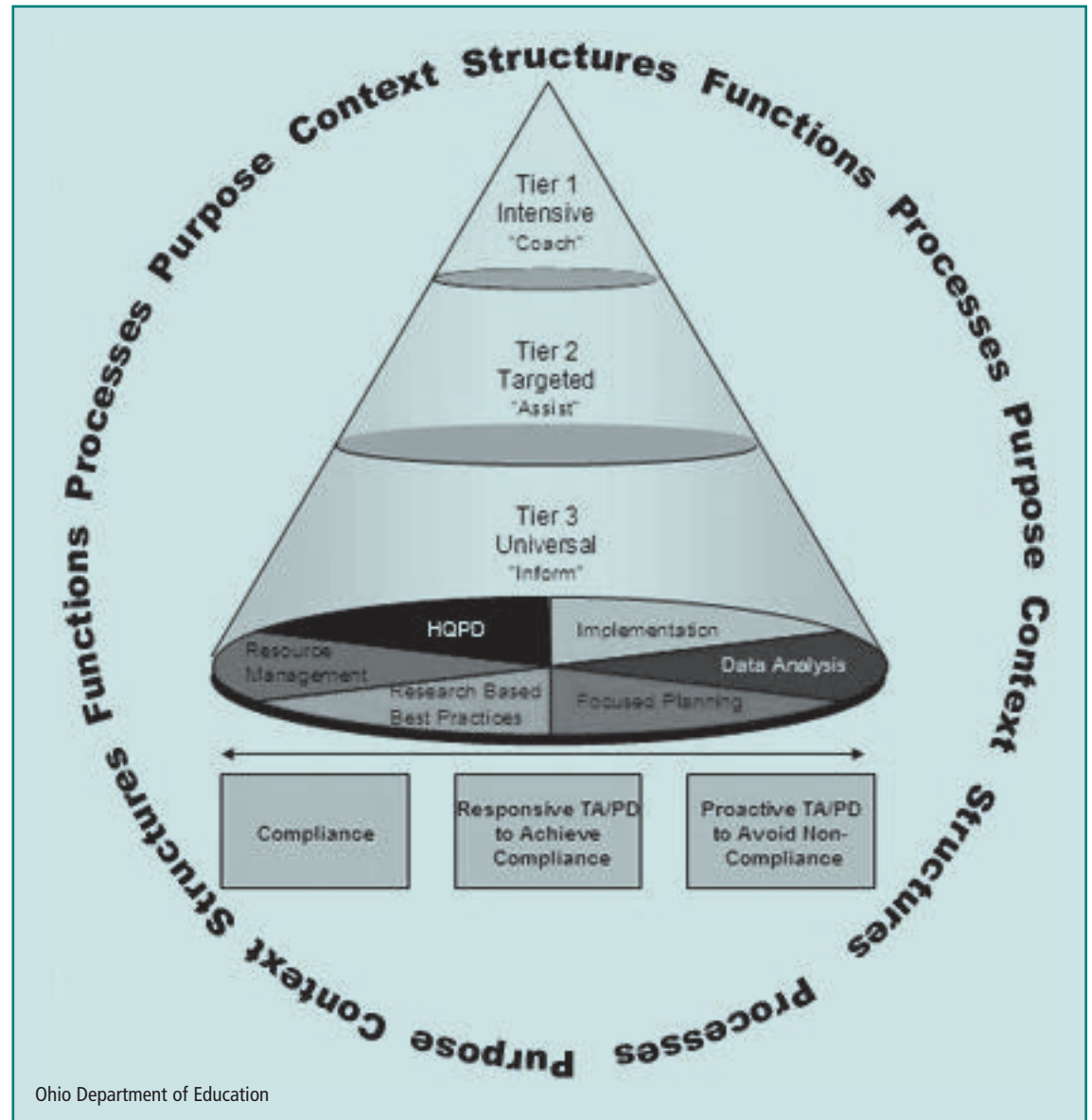
The recent activities of the Ohio legislature in this realm suggest the beginning of a break with the state’s “hands-off” approach. The legislature passed a provision requiring that districts be assigned an “academic distress commission” if they fail to make AYP *and* have been given the state’s lowest accountability designation (“academic emergency”) for four years. Implementation of this provision took effect July 1, 2007. The state-assigned academic distress commissions are five-member teams who continue to operate until the

district has achieved the designation “continuous improvement” for two years, or at the discretion of the state department of education. Three members of each commission are appointed by the department and two by the chair of the district school board. The academic distress commissions have several important powers, including authority to appoint school building administrators and

The law establishing the academic distress commissions also contains provisions preventing collective bargaining agreements negotiated during the existence of the commission from interfering with the express powers granted the commission.

reassign administrative personnel, terminate contracts of administrators or administrative personnel, contract with a private entity to perform school or district management functions, establish a budget for the district, and approve district expenditures. The law establishing the academic distress commissions also contains provisions preventing collective bargaining agreements negotiated during the existence of the commission from interfering with the express powers granted the commission. It likewise invalidates any collective bargaining provisions adopted after passage of the law that would interfere with the powers granted the commission.⁴⁵

This change in Ohio policy has seemingly been encouraged in part by No Child Left Behind’s focus on a state role in school improvement and restructuring. While this new provision will have no practical effect on education policy in the state for at least four years from the law’s inception, as no district in Ohio is currently designated as in a state of “academic emergency,” the provision’s passage might signal that the federal mandates in No Child Left Behind may in fact encourage traditionally reticent states to take a more active approach to school turnaround efforts. This suggestion is interesting, as No Child Left Behind has seemed to have the opposite effect in states that had chosen to be very proactive about intervention activities prior to the law’s passage.



The tri-tiered model of state support employed by Ohio recognizes both that all local education agencies need state support and that limited state capacity necessitates targeted assistance. Local education agencies with “at-risk” schools receive periodic assistance, while more intense coaching services are provided to local education agencies that have been identified for improvement or contain schools in improvement or restructuring status. Even that top level, though, has provide (up to the present) little intervention beyond coaching support.

Virginia: Investing in Turnaround Leaders

Like other states, Virginia has strengthened and clarified its ability to take corrective action against LEAs that fail to incite the necessary degree of school-level reform. Virginia has also focused on identifying and deploying individual leaders who can lead school intervention effectively. The approach has gained momentum and backing at the same time that it has been questioned by some for the degree of impact it has had on the ground. Virginia's experience suggests that an approach that relies too exclusively on individual leaders – without corollary attention to the operating conditions in which they do their work – may not be sufficient to generate fundamental change in stagnant systems, particularly at scale.

Accreditation's Role in Accountability

Virginia makes decisions about intervention in under-performing schools based on a dual system of accountability that involves both state accreditation standards and No Child Left Behind AYP standards. The unique element of this dual

This approach to turning around chronically under-performing schools focuses on the identification and training of effective school leaders to act as inciters of change.

accountability structure is the primacy of academic standards in the accreditation process for public schools in Virginia. Accreditation decisions are thus based on not only administration and facilities (the norm in many states), but in fact primarily on performance-based academic assessments.⁴⁶ Assessment performance determines into which of five categories of accreditation the school will fall.

Those schools that do not meet the state-established academic criteria are deemed Accredited with Warning and subject to a three-tiered academic review process, with the state conducting the review for those schools determined to be most in need. Schools in the Accredited with Warning category have three years to become accredited or they are categorized as Accreditation Denied. These schools face more intrusive reforms, and the district may enter into a voluntary agreement with the state that outlines reforms to be undertaken to turn the school around. In 2004, the state Board of Education reformed the Virginia Standards of Quality to increase the state's power to direct reforms in schools that remain unaccredited. The new Standards of Quality require that districts maintain fully accredited schools. They also establish that the state may take action against districts that fail to maintain accredited schools. The state had taken action to dictate reforms in three schools that have been unable to achieve accreditation, as of the 2006-7 school year.

The Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (VSTSP)

Virginia allows districts to choose from a group of commonly used reforms when intervening in schools in the Accredited with Warning and Accreditation Denied categories.⁴⁷ The most unique aspect of the reform efforts in Virginia, however, is the Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program. This approach to turning around chronically under-performing schools focuses on the identification and training of effective school leaders to act as inciters of change. VSTSP is a state-funded "executive education program" conducted by the University of Virginia's education and business schools. It was first introduced in 2004, as part of then-Governor Mark Warner's "Education for a Lifetime" initiative.⁴⁸

The Program began with two successive classes of 10 turnaround specialists, accomplished school leaders trained in the business and education skills that UVA deemed necessary for school turnaround.⁴⁹ The most recent cohort included 25 leaders from around the country, an indication that Virginia's approach has drawn interest from other localities struggling with the need to

While the districts deploying the Turnaround Specialists commit to some additional financial support on a per-pupil basis for each turnaround school, the state does not require any other form of increased authority or change in operating conditions to support the work.

restructure schools at scale. The program has three training components. Turnaround Specialists (each of whom has been identified as a principal with an effective track record of raising achievement in high-poverty schools) attend a five-day program at the Darden School of Business Management to hone the skills necessary for turnaround work. These skills include responses to leadership challenges, strategic change and data-based decision-making, conflict management, and resource leveraging. Next, the District Leadership Academy allows for the Specialists to work with their district-level leadership to ensure that the level of support necessary for success is in place. Finally, the Turnaround Leadership Institute includes implementation of a system of project management. Program participants commit to serving multi-year tenures in the schools.⁵⁰ While the districts deploying

the Turnaround Specialists commit to some additional financial support on a per-pupil basis for each turnaround school, the state does not require any other form of increased authority or change in operating conditions to support the work.

Recently, media reports have called the program's early effectiveness into question. One report noted the struggles of a particular Turnaround Specialist, and went on to add that 14 of the Program's first 21 principals oversaw schools that failed to meet AYP standards, based on 2005-2006 testing.⁵¹ Additionally, more than half the Turnaround Specialists have changed schools or left the Program, despite making three-year commitments. At least one school has closed under the leadership of a School Turnaround Specialist.⁵² The Program's administrators counter such criticism with research indicating that 12 of 18 schools whose administrator was in the first year of the Program experienced at least a 10 percent reduction in state assessment failure rates.⁵³ The VSTSP continues to receive a fair amount of attention nationally for its articulation of the specific skills school leaders need in order to manage turnaround effectively, and for the training it provides its Specialist cohorts. The experience of those leaders, once placed in turnaround schools, would seem to support *The Turnaround Challenge's* contention that good leadership, while a vital element in turnaround, is not sufficient without corollary changes to the operating context in which those leaders work.

- ¹Feller, B. (2006, May 10). Overhaul looms for rising number of schools. *The Boston Globe*.
- ²20 U.S.C. 6311, §1116(a)(14).
- ³See, for example: Hassel, B. & T. Ziebarth. (2005). *School restructuring via the No Child Left Behind Act: Potential state roles*. Education Commission of the States.
- ⁴Governance and Policy Making. In *Alabama Education Policy Primer*. A+ Education Foundation (2006). Available at http://www.aplusala.org/primer/pdfs/5_Governance_9-16.pdf
- ⁵The divisions represented are the following: Classroom Improvement; Federal Programs; Alabama Reading Initiative; Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative; Student Assessment; Special Education Services; Professional Education Personnel Evaluation; and Prevention and Support Services.
- ⁶Information regarding the structure of the Arizona accountability system may be found on the Arizona Department of Education website at: http://www.ade.state.az.us/azlearns/AZ_LEARNS_History.pdf
- ⁷Del Puerto, L. (2006, December 15). AZ Sen. Karen Johnson wants to take critical look at 'No Child' in Arizona. *Capitol Times*.
- ⁸Garcia, D.R. & J.M. Ryan. (2004). *The Condition of School Accountability in Arizona: 2004*. Arizona Education Policy Initiative, Arizona State University.
- ⁹Parcell, D.E. & P.S. Young. *Arizona LEARNS and the School Improvement Unit*. Available at http://www.ade.state.az.us/azlearns/School_Improvement.pdf
- ¹⁰For a full description of the plan's selection criteria, see the California Education Code § 52053.
- ¹¹California Education Code § 52054.
- ¹²Education Commission of the States. (2002), *State interventions in low-performing schools and school districts*. Available at <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/41/52/4152.pdf>.
- ¹³Scott, C. (2007) *Beyond the mountains: An early look at restructuring results in California*. Center on Education Policy.
- ¹⁴To determine school grades, points are awarded to the school based on both the percentage of students scoring in the three highest performance categories and the percentage of students exhibiting significant learning gains on both the reading and mathematics versions of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). These points are then combined with consideration of the school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status to determine the school's final grade. For an explanation of the state's grading system, see: Florida Department of Education. Grading Florida Public Schools 2005-2006. Available at http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/0506/schlGrds_pages_1_2.pdf.
- ¹⁵Bureau of School Improvement, Florida Department of Education. *2005-2006 School Improvement Plan Guidance*. Available at <http://www.bsi.fsu.edu/pdf/0506GuidanceSIPPlan.PDF>
- ¹⁶Florida State Board of Education. *District Action Plan for Repeating F Schools*. Available at http://www.bsi.fsu.edu/pdf/DistActionPlanTemplate_RepeatingFSchools.pdf
- ¹⁷Fla. Stat. § 1008.345. The state has also indicated that other "schools of concern," including those that experience a substantial drop in performance or suffer failure during its first year of existence may be subject to the sanctions described in this section. To date, the state has enforced the sanctions only against schools with repeated F grades.
- ¹⁸Three of the repeat F schools are located in Miami-Dade County, two located in Orlando (Orange County), and one school each is located in Jacksonville (Duval County) and Jefferson County. All of the repeat F schools are high schools.
- ¹⁹Postal, L. (2006, April 19). F schools need 'urgency.' *Orlando Sentinel*, p. D1.
- ²⁰Winn, J., comments. (2006, November). *Fixing Failing Schools: Is the NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND Toolkit Working?* American Enterprise Institute Symposium. Transcript available at: <http://www.aei.org/events/filter..eventID.1351/transcript.asp>
- ²¹Hawaii Department of Education. (2005, March 3). *24 Hawaii schools targeted for restructuring under NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND*. Press Release. Available at <http://www.hcps.k12.hi.us/STATE/COMM/DOEPRESS.NSF/0/8b5a7de30f32d8550a256fb2000be60c?OpenDocument>
- ²²Hurley, T. (2005, May 6). Plan for struggling schools OK'd. *The Honolulu Advertiser*, p. 1B.
- ²³Creamer, B. (2006, August 28). Cost of test aid could double. *The Honolulu Advertiser*, p. 1A.
- ²⁴See *Baltimore Teachers Union v. Md. State Bd. of Educ.*, 379 Md. 192 (2006).
- ²⁵See *Md. State Bd. of Educ.*, 379 Md. at 195.
- ²⁶Going public with school privatization: State's contract with Edison Schools, Inc. is in its fifth year: Is it a good deal for the Baltimore City Public Schools? *The Abell Report*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2005). Available at: <http://www.abell.org/pubsitems/arn905.pdf>
- ²⁷Center on Educational Policy. *Building on State Reform: Maryland School Restructuring*.
- ²⁸De Vise, D. (2006, September 26). 'Lite' Choice in School Reform. *Washington Post*, p.B5.
- ²⁹Wan, W. (2007, January 29). Staff is reeling after bold move: All employees must reapply for jobs. *Washington Post*, p. B6.

- ³⁰Bowie, L. (2006, April 2). Schoolyard Brawl: City and state leaders stand on opposing sides of the debate over how to improve public education in Baltimore; Grasmick mingles politics, accountability. *Baltimore Sun*, p. 1A.
- ³¹For a detailed description of the state review panels, see the School District Accountability page on the Massachusetts Department of Education web site: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/panel/overview.html>
- ³²Tench, M. (2004, September 28). Ailing school eyed for state takeover. *The Boston Globe*, p.A1.
- ³³Schworm, P. (2005, October 30). Critics say state delayed as a school floundered: Despite legal powers, intervention is rare. *The Boston Globe*.
- ³⁴Massachusetts Department of Education. (2006, October 26). BOE votes to allow state to step in sooner to help low performing schools. Press Release. Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=3121>
- ³⁵See 603 CMR 2.03 for more detail on the new regulations.
- ³⁶For information on the budget requests, see http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/doe_budget/FY2008.html
- ³⁷By one estimate, about 70% of the schools nationwide identified as failing and facing No Child Left Behind sanctions are in just seven states: Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, California and Georgia. See 544 Michigan Schools Fail Federal Standards. *Detroit Free Press* (2006, August 25), p. 1.
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- ³⁹For more information on the ABCS coaching program , see <http://www.abcscoaches.org/aboutABCS.asp>
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The Turnaround Laboratories: Four Major Districts' Turnaround Strategies

Big-change efforts that reject marginal reform

While Mass Insight's research into existing state strategies for intervention in chronically under-performing schools provides some important lessons for future action, the steps taken have, as noted in the previous section, been fairly tentative so far. While some incorporate promising approaches, most have encountered significant frustrations, and none has produced substantial, enduring change in a scaled-up manner.

Perhaps unsurprisingly – since they are that much closer to the challenge – much of the bolder work on organizing school turnaround to date has happened at the district level, where a handful of entrepreneurial superintendents, driven by extreme performance challenges and political pressures, have jumped in front to create some dramatically different new strategies.

Perhaps most importantly, this research highlights the need for a special, protected space to provide the enabling conditions necessary for turning around under-performing schools.

These turnaround laboratories are two to three years old, so only preliminary indications can be drawn on the effectiveness of their experiments. But it is clear that some of the district experiments are making much more headway in shaking up the status quo than has been the case with more traditional reform strategies focused exclusively on coaching and staff development. It is also clear that these approaches share some critical common elements, though they deliver these elements in a variety of ways.

Mass Insight reviewed the approaches and direction of a number of districts both for this project and for concurrent research on school turnaround for the NewSchools Venture Fund. To these ends, Mass Insight and its consultants conducted more

than 50 structured, protocol-based interviews with district officials, representatives of education management organizations (EMOs) and individuals with detailed direct knowledge of each district. The research team also scoured public sources of data and media reports. They developed a “market factbase” for each geographic area studied, including information about factors such as the scope and scale of the turnaround challenge and current district approaches to restructuring in use in the district.

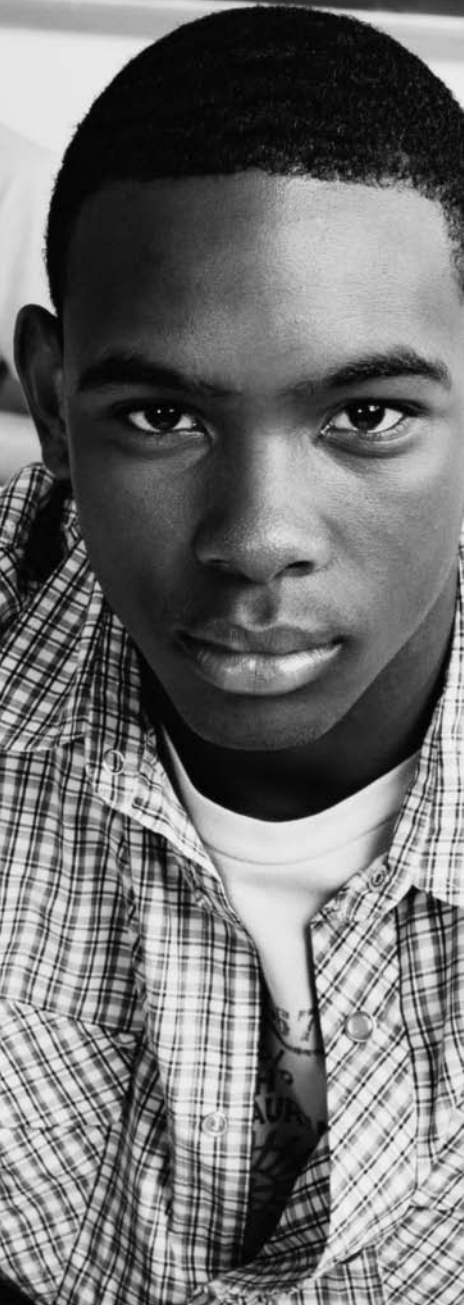
Using these factbases, as well as independent, more in-depth studies on the most promising districts, leading-edge practices were identified in four districts for this report: Chicago, Miami-Dade, New York City, and Philadelphia.

Hallmarks Across All Four Districts

The directions taken by these cities vary, and are greatly influenced by their local circumstances, politics, and capacities. There are, however, a few basic ideas at the heart of all the strategies. All four cities have created initiatives that recognize:

- The need for dramatic, fundamental change, replacing incremental reforms that have not produced results
- The need for changed operating conditions: union-negotiated flexibility in hiring, evaluation, hours and pay, incentives, personnel deployment options, and other work rules
- The need to apply greater capacity to accomplish turnaround, in part through intensive collaboration with external providers
- The need for additional investment.

These hallmarks support, in general, major findings in *The Turnaround Challenge* and some of the principal recommendations in the main report's proposed framework for school turnaround at scale.



Management and Decision-Making Dynamics

These innovative models may share important attributes, but they come to grips in different ways with key implementation questions. For example: the districts vary in their approach to what *The Turnaround Challenge* (among other research reports) calls the “loose-tight” management dynamic. Where does strategic and implementation decision-making reside – at the district/network level (centralized/tight) or at the school level (decentralized/loose)? Taken together, the four districts describe a continuum as follows, from tight to loose:

1. **Centralized/Tight: Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone**

A single cluster of schools, in one Zone, managed tightly and directly by the district. Miami-Dade, eager to produce results quickly, went with one core set of strategies and applied it across 39 under-performing schools.

2. **Portfolio (Mixed) Approach: Chicago's Renaissance 2010 and Philadelphia's “Diverse Provider” model**

Creating different clusters of schools that rest at different points on the autonomy continuum. Both districts have experimented with schools managed by partners that can establish, to a degree, their own approaches and operating rules. Both districts have also undertaken turnaround work themselves, on behalf of failing schools that remain under direct district control.

3. **Decentralized/Loose: Empowerment Zone and Children First, New York City**

New York's Children First initiative differs from the other models profile here because it is a districtwide effort. Its essential idea, though, is the empowerment of the leaders who are closest to the students (i.e., at the school level) to make decisions on school design, budget, management, curriculum, staffing, schedules, and operations, in exchange for fairly tight district control over achievement standards and accountability.

Our aim here was to look for bold steps: districts that are attempting to reinvent the status quo. In New York, strong political leadership has enabled that reinvention process to be brought before the whole district; in the other three districts, it has begun with the failing schools where consensus on the need for fundamental change was most evident. Our guess is that most districts and states may need to follow that path. The longevity, clout, and strong working relationships shared by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and School Chancellor Joel Klein in New York are the exception, not the rule (though Chicago's Richard Daley and Arne Duncan come close). That political strength is what has enabled these school districts to move ahead.

It is also worth reiterating that all of these district programs are still in the experimental stage. It is still too early to measure their full impact on performance, particularly over time and at scale. However, they encompass creative, sometimes dramatic, and often promising approaches to the three 'C' issues Mass Insight identifies in *The Turnaround Challenge* as crucial to state action on turnaround: conditions change, capacity-building, and clustering for efficiency and effectiveness.

Perhaps most importantly, for example, this research highlights the need for a special, protected space to provide the enabling conditions necessary for turning around under-performing schools. The specifics differ, but the main idea is the same across Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone, Chicago's Ren-10 schools, Philadelphia's Creative Action and Results Region and private partnership options, and New York City's Empowerment options within Children First. It is partly from their experience that Mass Insight developed its proposed turnaround framework, designed to help states ensure that such creative, strategic responses to the turnaround challenge are not limited to a few individually entrepreneurial districts, but are more easily accessible to all public school districts statewide.

Much of the bolder work on organizing school turnaround to date has happened at the district level, where a handful of entrepreneurial superintendents have created dramatically different new strategies.



Chicago's Renaissance 2010: A Spectrum of Autonomy-for-Accountability Options

District-Based Turnaround Lab 1: The Renaissance 2010 Story

At its heart, the Renaissance 2010 initiative (or “Ren-10,” as it’s called) is Chicago’s attempt to marry the opportunity for fundamental reform represented by under-performing schools with the changes in authority and governance modeled by the district’s successful charter school movement. To build district and community-wide support, however, it does so through a variety of approaches that offer autonomy in exchange for increased accountability.

Context

Intervention History

Chicago has a long and complex history with school reform. The nation’s third-largest school system, CPS has over 600 schools

The district issues an RFP for each new school, which is then opened under one of three governance structures: Charter School, Contract School, or Performance School.

and serves over 420,000 racially diverse students who are largely from low-income homes. Like many other large urban systems, CPS entered the modern reform era having historically faced up to its difficult challenges with ultimately unsuccessful responses – so unsuccessful, in fact, that in 1987, the U.S. Secretary of Education deemed it “the worst school system in America.”

Thus began the first of three waves of Chicago school reform. The first wave began in 1988 and focused on decentralization,

with the creation of locally elected councils that had the primary task of hiring and firing school principals. This wave of reform successfully gained parental and community investment and fostered site-based innovation, but failed to markedly increase student achievement. The system also struggled with fiscal mismanagement, labor instability, and crumbling infrastructure.

The second wave of reform began in 1995 when Mayor Richard Daley was granted sweeping authority over CPS, including the right to appoint the school board. Under the leadership of CEO Paul Vallas, the district focused on accountability. The new administration improved the district’s financial situation, stabilized labor relations, repaired decaying schools, and built new schools to alleviate overcrowding. The district also experimented with charter schools, supplementary programs, and new curricular initiatives. Student achievement slowly began to rise, most notably in the district’s 15 new charter schools. Overall progress, however, did not result in the broad-based achievement gains necessary to meet the demands of No Child Left Behind.

The third wave of reform began when Arne Duncan became CEO in 2001. Beginning in 2004, he attempted to implement a plan to close all schools in four high-poverty neighborhoods on the south side and reopen them under new management. There was huge opposition from the communities, and it was shelved. Duncan’s strategy now centers on a theory of opening new schools – and the Renaissance 2010 plan, unveiled in June 2004.

Current District Approaches to Restructuring

To address the needs of its chronically failing schools, CPS has developed 11 restructuring options, most of which fit into NCLB’s fifth category of “other major restructuring.” By 2005

there were 200 district schools that were either undergoing some form of NCLB-mandated planning for restructuring or in restructuring itself. Of those, 195 chose the “other” category, while one replaced staff and principal, four replaced the principal. None chose to charterize.

CPS has been a proactive charter authorizer, opening close to the maximum allowed by law, and indeed testing the law by allowing high-performing charters to open multiple campuses.

The district emphasizes choice for students and families. Chicago is engaged in multiple, overlapping strands of school restructuring. Major current initiatives include:

- ▶ NCLB Restructuring
- ▶ Magnet Schools: some without attendance boundaries and Magnet Cluster Schools with attendance boundaries
- ▶ Small Schools led by teams of teachers
- ▶ Transformation Project Schools: A new effort for the 2006-2007 school year, the Transformation Project replaces the Chicago High School Redesign Project (CHISRE). CHISRE was an intermediary set up with funding from the Gates Foundation to create 36 small schools. However, these small schools often opened using the same leadership as the schools they replaced. The Transformation High Schools (there are more than a dozen in all) will use new leadership and curricula designed by multiple providers, including Kaplan K-12 Learning Services.

- ▶ Renaissance 2010: Up to 100 new schools are being opened under Renaissance 2010 (or Ren-10); 55 had opened as of 2006-7. See details on this initiative in the remainder of this section.

Highlighted Initiative: Renaissance 2010

Ren-10 Overview

Chicago’s latest reform story, the Renaissance 2010 initiative, aims to shut down approximately 70 district schools, either for under-performance or because of under-utilized space considerations. Ren-10 aims to open 100 schools in their place by 2010 – primarily new starts, along with a smaller number of schools that undergo turnaround or closure and reopening.

The district's Office of New Schools issues an RFP for each new school, which is then opened under one of three governance structures: Charter School, Contract School, or Performance School (see sections and chart below for detailed summary of these options). Most Renaissance schools will be small, enrolling no more than 600 students. All neighborhood students are eligible to attend Renaissance schools, though some will be open to students city-wide; students who attended turnaround schools will have priority when the new school reopens. The number of Renaissance schools selected each year will depend on the quality of the proposals submitted, and accepted proposals will be held accountable for meeting stated student achievement goals in exchange for increased autonomy. Initial contracts will be for five years, and are funded on a per-pupil basis.

Chicago's Renaissance 2010 continued

At the elementary school level, new schools and turnarounds generally affect every grade level at once; at the high school level, in some cases turnaround is conducted (or new schools are opened) grade by grade. In those instances, grade-by-grade phase-in starts with the freshman class, while the remaining grades stay in the school and are phased out as that class advances.

Teachers whose schools have been closed do not, apparently, hold any priority in the hiring process for either the newly opened schools or elsewhere in the district.

In 2006, the district offered two Ren-10 RFPs – one inviting existing operators to replicate successful models, the other open to all. The invited RFP was given to those who currently operate at least two successful schools and who have previously participated in the open RFP process. This gives applicants an opportunity to create up to 2,400 new seats over a four-year period.

Ren-10 schools are chosen for “rebirth” because of federal and state laws, and Chicago Board of Education policies that grant CPS authorization to temporarily close and re-open low performing schools. Public hearings are required before the board acts. Key factors in choosing schools for “rebirth” are academic performance and rate of improvement (or lack thereof). The existence of empty school buildings and the district’s ability to reassign students to under-filled buildings during transition years are vital to this plan.

Renaissance 2010’s portfolio of reform options provides for three levels of management autonomy:

Charter Schools are funded by the Board of Education, but have freedom from many state laws, district initiatives, and board policies and are not required to follow many board regulations. They can set their own policies for curriculum, school hours, and discipline, but are held accountable for student academic achievement. Teachers and staff are either employees of the non-profit organization that governs the charter school or of an education management organization hired by the non-profit.

Teachers may remain covered by the district bargaining agreement, negotiate as a separate unit with the charter school governing body, or work independently. Certification is not required, but uncertified teachers must meet stated requirements (a bachelor’s degree, five years experience in the degree area, passing score on state teacher tests, and evidence of professional growth). Mentoring must also be provided to uncertified teachers. Charters must participate in the state’s retirement system.

CPS has been a proactive charter authorizer, opening the maximum (30) allowed by law, and indeed testing the law by allowing high-performing charters from among the first 15 operators to open multiple campuses. CPS is considered to have one of the most thoughtful approaches to authorizing charters, with their slow-growth, high-quality plan that is selective, transparent, and includes an ongoing rigorous audit process. As of September 2007, there were 56 charter campuses, operated by 28 independent entities. A majority of the charters are part of the Ren-10 initiative.

Contract Schools are managed by independent non-profits in accordance with a five-year Performance Agreement between the organization and the Board of Education. Contract Schools are free from many CPS policies and requirements, but not from

state school laws. Contract School teachers and school staff are employees of the non-profit or company that has the “contract.”

There were some schools called “contract” schools before Ren-10 was officially announced, such as a KIPP school that has since closed. There are now four Ren-10 contract schools; the first was opened by American Quality Schools, in partnership with the Westside Ministers Coalition. The Austin Business and Entrepreneurship Academy opened in fall 2006 with its ninth grade class, as a “school of high standards providing students with a strong academic foundation, business knowledge, social skills, and practical experiences to enable them to pursue economic opportunity for themselves and create economic opportunity for the Austin community.” There are also two contract schools outside of Ren-10 – two elementaries closed for low performance and re-opened in 2003 as contract schools. The district plans to open as many as eight contract schools by the fall of 2008.

Performance Schools are CPS district-run schools exempt from or given additional flexibility on many district initiatives and policies, but subject to state laws. Teachers and school staff are employees of CPS. There are 19 performance schools open as of fall 2007.

For further comparison of the three Ren-10 options, see next section.

Renaissance 2010 Management Dynamics

By giving entrepreneurs the opportunity to launch new schools or turn around existing ones, coupled with strict accountability requirements, the district effectively placed the initiative’s focus on student achievement, rather than on who’s in charge. The flexibility among several design options has generated a combination of unique, locally founded schools as well as privately managed, more easily replicable models. The “*readiness to act*”

factors addressed through Ren-10 include: autonomy, decision-making, governance, and teacher contracts.

Autonomy

The three possible school types under Renaissance 2010 – charter, contract, and performance schools – offer schools differing degrees of freedom from CPS rules and regulations. This range also allows for varied levels of autonomy with respect to staffing, budget, and governance. The main thrust of the Ren-10 policy, however, is that all schools are held accountable for meeting stated goals for student achievement and success in exchange for their increased autonomy. Like failing traditional public schools, Ren-10 schools that are not meeting their student performance markers are subject to closure by the district.

Decision-Making

Renaissance 2010 schools are all offered extensive programmatic and curricular flexibility, which is intended to encourage innovative designs and creative models. Though all school types must meet state learning standards, contract and performance schools also generate a performance agreement as to how they’ll meet CPS standards through a designated series of student outcome measures. Decisions on individual curricular elements are flexible and are agreed upon in the individual school performance plan. Charter schools are not linked to other CPS initiatives, whereas contract and performance schools have the option to participate if they so desire. All three school types are also able to manipulate the academic calendar and traditional school day, provided they meet CPS minimums.

Governance

Governance under Ren-10 also varies depending on school type. Both charter and contract schools are administered by approved independent organizations, whereas performance schools are governed by CPS, but granted specific autonomies. Charters are run by a governing board, but performance schools are managed

Chicago's Renaissance 2010 continued

by a local school council composed of community members, parents, and school leaders. Contract schools can select either a board or a local school council.

Teacher Contracts

Different forms of contracts and differentiated pay scales for teachers are also hallmarks of the Ren-10 schools. Performance schools are most like traditional schools in this arena, in that their teachers must be compensated according to union guidelines and all teachers are members of Chicago Teachers' Union. On the other hand, charter and contract schools can determine their own teacher compensation scale and their teachers can choose whether to unionize. Contract and charter school teachers may join the CTU, but may not participate in the actual bargaining agreement with the district.

Chicago has benefited from the presence of a proactive mayor and superintendent who operate on a very strong political foundation.

Teachers whose schools have been closed do not, apparently, hold any priority in the hiring process for either the newly opened schools or elsewhere in the district (though they will not be "excessed" or laid off). Under Renaissance 2010 guidelines, whether the converted and re-opened schools require their teachers to be certified depends on the school type; all teachers in contract and performance schools must hold appropriate certifications, but only half the teachers in new charter schools are bound to such regulations. Leaders of Ren-10 schools may hail from various non-traditional fields, including business, higher education, and community organizations.

For a summary of the Ren-10 options, see the table on next page.

Results to Date

Given that the Renaissance 2010 schools are only in their first years of operation, it is too soon to judge whether the initiative will be successful. We do know that the average attendance rate at the 22 Cohort One schools is 96 percent, two percentage points higher than that of other CPS schools. There are other early signals of promise; all ten new high schools reporting Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) scores in 2007 did better than their comparison neighborhood high schools in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards. A performance contract has since been incorporated into each school's annual audit. The performance reports will examine three aspects of student test scores: percentage of students meeting standards in current year, how these figures changed from previous year, and how they compare to figures in schools charter students would have attended.

It is worth noting that student achievement in CPS schools generally rose dramatically in almost all portions of the 2005-2006 Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), with up to 96 percent of schools improving in math and 92 percent improving in both reading and science. These results represent the largest one-year test score gains since Mayor Daley first took office in 1995 and echo the upward trend since the first administration of the ISAT in 2000. Those increases continued in 2007 across the board, for new schools, charters, Ren-10 schools, and for the district as a whole, with grade 3-8 students in new schools and charters slightly outperforming district averages.

It may also be relevant to note the performance of CPS's older CPS charter schools, on which the Ren-10 initiative is broadly based: Chicago's charters perform better than the available neighborhood schools three-quarters of the time. The charters almost all have strong graduation rates, huge waiting lists, higher attendance rates (in all but one), and the models are being replicated by non-charter district schools. Seventy percent of CPS charter elementary schools improved faster than CPS as a whole;

Comparison of Renaissance 2010 School Management Options

	Charter	Contract	Performance
Curriculum	Meets state standards as specified in Plan; not linked to CPS initiatives	Meets CPS and state learning standards as specified in Performance Agreement; may or may not participate in CPS initiatives	Meets CPS and state learning standards as specified in Performance Agreement; may or may not participate in CPS initiatives
School calendar and schedule	Must meet state minimums	Must meet state minimums	Must meet state minimums; may or may not follow CPS, as specified in Plan
School funding	Per pupil	Per pupil	Per pupil
Teacher certification	In schools created prior to 2003, 75% of teachers must be certified; 50% in new schools	100% of teachers must be certified	100% of teachers must be certified
CPS principal eligibility required?	No	No	Yes
Teacher pension fund?	Certified teachers in pension fund. Others covered by Social Security.	CTU teachers in pension fund. Other teachers covered by Social Security	All teachers in pension fund
Teachers and staff employed by:	Charter school board or sub-contracted management organization	Contract school board or sub-contracted management organization	CPS
Teachers' union	May join CTU but not join in CPS agreement	May join CTU but not join in CPS agreement	CTU members
Employee compensation	Determined by school	Determined by school	In accordance with contract

(Table drawn from www.ren2010.cps.il.us)

Chicago's Renaissance 2010 continued

all CPS charter high schools outperformed the district schools students would have otherwise attended. Charters remain, however, a relatively small part of the educational landscape, educating eight percent of Chicago students.

Strengths and Challenges of Chicago's Intervention Experience

Strong Political Foundation

Chicago has benefited from the presence of a proactive mayor and superintendent who operate on a very strong political foundation. Controversial approaches such as Ren-10 appear to require this kind of strong-willed authority – whether provided through state intervention (such as Oakland and Philadelphia) or the ballot box (Chicago and New York).

Substantial Interest from Partners

Renaissance 2010 has generated a substantial amount of interest from community members, private organizations, parents and teachers. More than 50 proposals were received for the very first

Chicago remains, along with New York City, one of the nation's most compelling centers of break-the-mold school reform and a district that deserves close attention.

RFP in 2004, and 22 were accepted. In 2006, CPS offered two further RFPs. (The Ren-10 RFP is a comprehensive, thoughtful document that turnaround policy planners would do well to look over. See the listing in the Resources section.) However, some stakeholders have expressed concern (see below).

The Perils of Closure

Chicago has been in the vanguard for garnering community input into its schools, but the current local political climate suggests this is a double-edged sword. The success of Ren-10 depends upon strong local community support to get past the shock of school closure, so CPS must work hard to address existing community concerns for the policy to gain traction. It is also important that CPS is equally clear about the criteria for school closures as it is for new-school proposals, so that the plan doesn't feel like a covert attack on schools in certain areas or on public education more generally.

Many educators and community members are concerned about the negative impact school closures might have on their former students. According to some reports, violence and behavior issues have increased somewhat in schools that have received large numbers of students from closed failing schools, sparking public concern.

Getting the Oversight Right

Additionally, the performance pressure placed on schools by NCLB and other accountability policies has resulted in the district tightening the reins on many Renaissance schools. The district has created the Office of New Schools to work with the new schools, and has moved towards increasing the amount of support it offers to leaders of the schools. Some of the new-school operators are slightly concerned about a "slippery slope" of district involvement in their schools, while others welcome it as a source of support for schools that may not, in every case, have enough local capacity to address the challenges they face.

On-going Charter Hurdles

While the success of the original generation of Chicago charters provided much of the inspiration for Ren-10 initiatives and chartering represents one of the three options offered, the initiative is not providing a clear victory for charter supporters.

First, the state cap on charters has begun to limit their growth. State law only allows for 60 schools, and Chicago's cap is 30. There was an allowance, originally for each charter to set up multiple campuses; however, this has been changed to allow only the original 15 Chicago charters to open additional campuses – new charters cannot expand.

Second, given that substantial support from private foundations and community organizations was key to the success of Chicago's original charters, many wonder if there is enough private funding for all the proposed new schools. Business community backers originally committed to raising money for 100 new charter schools, but have some concerns about the district's ability to do that, given the charter cap.

Other Hurdles

Other hurdles include resistance within some parts of the CPS bureaucracy, lingering community opposition, and influential, anti-charter teacher unions. (Union leaders and community activists remain skeptical about the educational soundness of charters and the Ren-10 strategy, while appreciative of the “portfolio” aspect of the approach that permits them to be actively engaged in the work.)

An Entrepreneurial Response

Chicago faces all of the same organizational dynamics, funding challenges, and social issues that other big-city districts face. But like New York City, it has responded with energy, creativity, and sustained commitment. Its efforts have made it a hotbed, of sorts, for school reform, drawing significant local and national resources. For example: over the course of the 2007-8 school year, the district is cooperating with NewSchools Venture Fund and Chicago International Charter School, the city's largest charter operator, to “incubate” a new turnaround organization to be called ChicagoRise. The initiative is another signal of the district's readiness, with able partners, to directly address important challenges – in this case, the dearth of high-capacity external partners dedicated to conducting school turnaround. Strategies such as these that are under development in Chicago make it a laboratory of reform that should be of prime interest to urban education reform leaders everywhere.

The initiative is another signal of the district's readiness, with able partners, to directly address important challenges – in this case, the dearth of high-capacity external partners dedicated to conducting school turnaround.



Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone: Significant Reform through Central Control and Uniform Design

District-Based Turnaround Lab 2: A Cohort of "Superintendent's Schools"

For policymakers interested in the efficacy of direct, centrally-managed turnaround work, Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone is the initiative to watch. Within a sub-district that acts as an intensive care unit for chronically under-performing schools, Superintendent Rudy Crew is pursuing substantial reform in these schools through centralized control of prescribed interventions focused on (but not limited to) literacy – with promising early success.

Context

Intervention History

When Rudolph "Rudy" Crew became superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in the summer of 2004, M-DCPS

Crew believes the Zone approach – rapid implementation of a broad strategy within a significant number of schools – was necessary to create critical mass to change the culture across the rest of the district.

was facing severe challenges in several arenas, including personnel issues, school overcrowding, financial mismanagement, and persistent student underperformance. In response, the Florida legislature was seriously considering breaking up the Miami-Dade school district (the fourth largest school system in the country), and some state resources were being redirected to the northern part of Florida where it was hoped they'd have more impact.

Then the district recruited Crew, who had launched the high-profile Chancellor's District for failing schools in New York City. When he arrived, Crew immediately began work on a districtwide overhaul and comprehensive school reform strategy. He and his team pledged that they'd raise the state-issued "letter" grades for at least 10 of the district's lowest performing schools during the first year of their tenure. Further, they promised to raise the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test) scores of over 3,000 M-DCPS students within the same period.

During the first phase of his plan, Crew implemented several blanket reforms by increasing teacher pay, planning to improve school capacity, engaging the local community, and restructuring fiscal and personnel processes.

Current District Approaches to Restructuring

Unlike Chicago and Philadelphia, which have clearly distributed decision-making about how to effect school restructuring to a variety of in- and out-of district agents, Miami-Dade central office has focused on the centrally-directed Improvement Zone turnaround approach in order to achieve maximum impact in a minimum timeframe. However, several of the school options featured in restructuring in the other districts – such as charter and magnet schools – also form part of the landscape in Miami-Dade. In fact, these options are particularly significant in Miami-Dade because the state and district have an extensive history of school choice, started decades ago as a remedy for residential segregation. As described by Jane Hannaway and Sarah Cohodes of the Urban Institute (2007), the current set of choices (some of which comprise different school models, others of which are programs to provide access to a selection of standard district schools) includes:

- ▶ **Magnet schools:** 76 programs running in 67 schools, the first opened in 1973.
- ▶ **Charter schools:** 32 charter schools in the district, including the first opened in the state.
- ▶ **Controlled Choice.** Controlled choice schools have “an enhanced focus on an academic theme.” Currently there are two choice zones containing 19 Controlled Choice schools.
- ▶ **I Choose!** This program is designed to foster voluntary within-district school choice by increasing the number of choice schools available. It creates “All Academy” choice schools at under-enrolled and under-construction schools that will be open to the whole district.
- ▶ **New high school models:** Smaller learning communities in 16 high schools, career academies with business partnerships, satellite learning centers seeking to enable students to attend a public school at their parent’s workplace, etc.
- ▶ **K-8 Centers:** Combining elementary and middle school grade levels
- ▶ **State scholarship-based choice:** The Opportunity Scholarship Program, part of the state’s accountability system: the John M. McKay Scholarship, providing vouchers for special needs students not being appropriately served; and the Corporate Income Tax Credit Program.
- ▶ **NCLB choice options:** Mandated school transfer and supplemental education services.

NCLB and non-NCLB choice are administered through the School Choice and Parental Options Unit. The history and prevalence of choice in the district contributes to a significantly “pro-

In Miami-Dade’s intervention world, turnaround essentially comes in one flavor – but it’s a strong one.

choice” environment. In the 2005-2006 year, 22 percent of the students in Miami attended a “choice” school (a larger number than the entire school districts of Austin, Denver, or Boston). However because of all the other, more longstanding choice options, uptake of the NCLB options is low: less than one-half of one percent of students eligible for NCLB school choice in 2005-2006 requested and used a transfer. (Hannaway and Cohodes, 2007)

Highlighted Initiative: The School Improvement Zone

Zone Overview

Drawing on lessons learned from the NYC Chancellor’s district, Crew and Irving Hamer, then deputy superintendent for school improvement (and a senior advisor on *The Turnaround Challenge*), created a plan to rescue the district’s floundering schools. Using longitudinal data to identify the most acutely struggling schools, the district grouped them into a newly created quasi-district dubbed the “School Improvement Zone.”

The 39 School Improvement Zone schools (20 elementaries, eleven middle schools, and eight high schools) from eight feeder districts were selected based on a combination of factors, including consistently low academic performance and weak leadership

Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone continued

capacity. Many of these schools had received failing grades from the state for over three consecutive academic years, but were not all designated for state takeover under NCLB. All Zone schools remain in the Zone for three years.

Zone reform mandates a high level of conformity among its schools and their leaders on several important levels (discussed below). Though the reforms are not entirely inflexible, Superintendent Crew claims that this tighter, more centralized

Prior to introduction of the Zone, there were as many as eight different reading programs used across the district. Now the Zone mandates the use of common literacy curricula.

reform structure is necessary given persistent, pervasive underperforming conditions. But in parallel with mandated reforms, Zone schools have been enhanced by higher teacher salaries, longer school days and years, more resources, and intensive teacher training for the standards-based curricula.

The Zone also relies on sophisticated data-analysis. Using the same long-term test-score data that helped identify the 39 chronically under-performing schools, the system zeroed in on 3,000 specific students who were struggling, but showed the potential for better performance. Schools were helped to target these students to assist them in improving their scores.

Crew believes the Zone approach – rapid implementation of a broad strategy within a significant number of schools – was necessary to create critical mass to change the culture across the rest of the district. “I learned that you need enough schools so that you can create a conversation about the rest of the system,” Crew says. “You need to be able to put enough energy into these

39 schools so that it impacts the shape and redesign of the district. It has to affect issues of staffing, and major issues like compensation and professional development. You have to have enough size and scope so that you approximate the tipping point of the organization. You need to have a wide enough statistical field so you can look at the concept with some objectivity and get a sense of the range of success.” (Farrell, 2005)

Zone Management Dynamics

In Miami-Dade's intervention world, turnaround essentially comes in one flavor – but it's a strong one. Bucking reform theories holding that decentralization and autonomy at the school level are necessary to achieve success, particularly in urban settings where schools are microcosms of their diverse neighborhoods, Miami's central office retains control and mandates uniform interventions in Zone schools. Crew believes that bottom-up reform efforts are still “very vital,” but he contends that the enormity of the problem calls for centralized control. (Farrell, 2005)

More Structure than Autonomy

Miami-Dade's Zone emphasizes central office mandates rather than school autonomy. There is nothing piecemeal about the turnaround plan formed by the district, or about its implementation. Unlike many previous districtwide urban education reform efforts, Crew's scheme immediately tackled underperformance from a range of different angles. Zone policy mandates everything from uniform curriculum, schedules, compensation and teacher training requirements. (For more on these, see the next section.)

Given this control model, it is not surprising that Crew is strongly opposed to hiring external partners to manage Zone schools that continue to fail. Nor does he support the chartering of chronically failing schools, a suggestion promoted by the school board president.

Local stakeholders like community partners and parents have been involved primarily in support roles. When they first implemented the Zone strategy, district leaders met with strategic community partners such as after-school providers to help support the holistic development of especially vulnerable students. In addition, the Miami-Dade district instituted the (first of its kind) Parent Academy in partnership with local universities and with the financial support of a few large foundations. Though not specifically part of the Zone strategy, development of parent capacity across the district promises to help buttress the success of M-DCPS students both inside and outside the Zone.

Elements of Improvement Zone Reform

Zone schools are required to follow the reform plans set out by the district. These cover most aspects of the “*readiness to teach*” side of the learning triangle discussed in other parts of this report, including:

- ▶ **Uniform core curricula:** Prior to introduction of the Zone, there were as many as eight different reading programs used across the district. Now the Zone mandates the use of common literacy curricula.
- ▶ **Intensive teacher development:** A key component of the Zone strategy was increasing the capacity of its teachers. All of the Zone’s teachers are required to attend 56 hours of professional development per academic year, a much more rigorous requirement than the 120 development hours per five years required for other Florida schoolteachers.
- ▶ **Capacity building for school leaders:** Principals of Zone schools also receive extensive professional development and mentoring. The District hosts two leadership institutes for principals that emphasize literacy and successful instruction techniques and focus on the challenges specific to urban secondary schools.

The Zone reforms go further, requiring:

- ▶ **Longer learning day and learning year:** Zone schools have both an extended academic year (+10 days) and a longer school day (+1 hour), designed to support increased achievement despite challenging circumstances. Schools use the extra time for intensive reading tutoring and test prep for struggling students.
- ▶ **Longer class periods:** In addition, all Zone middle and high schools must implement block scheduling. The 100-minute class periods facilitate the type of intensive small-group literacy remediation required for students who performed at the lowest levels on the state’s standardized FCAT exam.
- ▶ **Support for key student transitions:** To help ease what can often be difficult transitions for students at key points in their schooling, Zone schools introduced sixth and ninth grade Transition Academies that focus on academic planning, study habits, career development, and FCAT preparation. In addition, Zone schools provide personalized support for particularly vulnerable elementary children: third graders who have been retained as well as pre-kindergarten through second grade students who are not performing to capacity.

Zone schools have both an extended academic year (+10 days) and a longer school day (+1 hour), designed to support increased achievement despite challenging circumstances.

In contrast to the central role of the district in other matters, decisions relating to professional development are made at the school level. Each Zone school elects a nine-member in-house professional development team that includes the assistant principal, literacy leader, and union representative. These teams are tasked with creating a set of professional development options they feel will meet the needs of the teachers at their particular school site.

Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone continued

Governance

Miami-Dade has carved out a new associate superintendent position dedicated to running the School Improvement Zone. This position is advised and supported by the School Improvement Zone University and Community Advisory Board. The advisory board, including university presidents, business professionals, elected officials, clergy, and parents, serves as a working group to help the Zone accomplish goals relating to teacher working environments, holistic child supports, and the preparation of students for higher education and work.

Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone was conceived, designed, and implemented within a couple of years – and gives signs of reasonably significant, immediate impact on children's learning.

Teacher Contracts

Like “regular” district teachers, Zone teachers are district employees and union members. However the key elements of the Zone strategy required considerable changes to the conditions of teaching and learning within the sub-district. The United Teachers of Dade (the teachers union) worked relatively cooperatively with Crew and his team in support of these new reforms. Some of this may well have been due to the timing of the reform, which came on the heels of a devastating scandal involving union leadership. Nonetheless, union support helped facilitate the successful implementation of the plan in January 2005, enabling the adoption of several conditions-changing linchpins of the Zone strategy, such as:

- ▶ **Increased incentives:** Miami-Dade uses financial as well as other incentives to attract and retain high-quality veteran

teachers. Educator salaries are 20 percent higher in Zone schools to compensate for longer work schedules, increased professional development requirements, and a degree of relinquished autonomy in instructional matters, such as literacy curricula.

- ▶ **Personnel changes:** One of the important strategic elements of Zone reforms was that it enabled personnel changes at various levels across the district. Fifteen of the 39 original Zone school principals were replaced. While Zone strategy aimed to attract highly qualified teachers, it did not necessarily involve the strategic replacement of current teachers in Zone schools. Instead, current teachers were offered the option to either accept the new conditions required of Zone teachers (discussed above) or request a transfer to another non-Zone school. Though many teachers initially requested a transfer out of the Zone, a substantial number of them changed their minds when thousands of new applicants from across the country began to lobby for their former jobs.

Results to Date

The School Improvement Zone has been in place a year longer than some of the other district turnaround experiments investigated for this report, so it is possible to get an early picture of progress under the model, which looks promising.

The results of the 2005 FCAT exam, administered just six weeks after the union negotiations ended, were encouraging. At the end of the 2004-2005 school year, Miami's Zone schools also received higher grades from the state than non-Zone schools. The more revealing 2006 results largely extended these trends. FCAT results demonstrated continued improvement both districtwide and in Zone schools. The districtwide third through tenth grade reading proficiency rate rose to 51 percent – a six-percentage-point jump over 2005 that pushed the percentage of

proficient readers in the District above 50 percent for the first time since the start of FCAT. In math, the District's overall proficiency rate rose to 55 percent. Twenty-two of the 39 schools in the Zone earned a higher grade than in the previous year, echoing improvement across the district.

The percentage of Miami-Dade third graders reading at grade level rose to 71 percent in 2006. This collective 10-percentage-point increase over 2005 was fueled by a 17 percent jump in Zone elementary schools. As a result, more than half the Zone's third graders – 55 percent – read at grade level by 2006. (By comparison, about a third of these Zone third graders were reading at grade level when the District launched the initiative.) In math, the percentage of Miami-Dade third graders scoring at grade level rose to 69 percent. This collective six-point increase over 2005 was similarly fueled by a Zone school increase of 10 percent. These gains largely continued with the 2007 scores, with increases in both reading and math scores at all grade levels tested, 3 through 10.

Strengths and Challenges of Miami-Dade's Intervention Experience

Urgency/Speed of Turnaround

Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone was conceived, designed, and implemented within a couple of years – and gives signs of reasonably significant, immediate impact on children's learning. The track record in Miami undermines some reformers' arguments that turnaround can take five to seven years to show real progress. (See below for sustainability issues.)

Community Involvement: Important for the Long Term

Critiques of Zone planning and implementation have sometimes focused on the flip side of its rapidly implemented, top-down reform model: lack of local buy-in and limited community involvement. Hamer, architect with Crew of the Zone policy, suggests that while the "fast turnaround" objectives of the initial Zone reform did not allow time or resources for broader consultation and involvement, "this is a crucial piece to sustaining the Zone's success." (School Leadership News, Spring 2006)

Building on Successful Union Partnership for Scale-up

The cooperation of the Dade teachers' union was critical in changing underlying conditions that allow Zone educators and administrators to act in ways that put the interest of students first. One challenge is to extend some of the Zone operating conditions, like the 56 hours of professional development for every Zone teacher, to all Miami-Dade teachers.

The cooperation of the Dade teachers' union was critical in changing underlying conditions that allow Zone educators and administrators to act in ways that put the interest of students first.

Sustainability

Besides the issue of scaling up Zone terms and conditions to the rest of the district, Crew also faces the question of how to sustain the progress made in the Zone schools beyond the proposed three-year "sunsetting" of the Zone. The district will need to address how schools will return to their original regional configurations. Will they retain any of the extra professional development, the extended day and year, etc.? What supports can be provided so that they and their students retain the progress they've made?



New York's *Children First*: A Districtwide Empowerment Strategy

District-Based Turnaround Lab 3: Rolling Out Empowerment Across the System

In most cases, a plan as radical as New York City's Empowerment School approach might only be attempted to turn around a small number of schools in response to legal imperatives. But in New York, empowerment to "put children first" developed from the beginning as part of an inventive, comprehensive strategy for changing education system-wide. As New York's Chancellor Joel I. Klein noted, "from the very outset of our work five years ago, we fundamentally rejected 'incrementalism' as a strategy." (Klein, 2007. See box on page 48.)

"*Children First*," as the broad initiative is called, has pursued fundamental change and quickly reached its tipping point. After introducing stability and coherence to the New York City sys-

The new contract ended "bumping" of junior teachers by more senior teachers, involuntary placements of teachers in schools, and other practices that limited principals' power to choose the teams best suited to serve their student population.

tem, and spending a couple of years testing new approaches and systems in its Empowerment Schools, the district is poised to roll out the three pillars of the reform: leadership, empowerment, and accountability to the entire 1.1 million student district. While the other three district-based experiments we analyze in this report focus solely on chronically under-performing

schools, our aim was to look for bold steps, and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein's recently released update to the *Children First* plan, with its districtwide rollout, is nothing if not bold. If it works, it will certainly be a large scale achievement. In the past, efforts of this nature typically focused on small cohort groups – not an entire school system.

Some of what we review here has been implemented over the past several years, while other aspects have only just been introduced and have yet to be fully rolled out (this is also true of some of our other "turnaround labs"). Keep in mind that the reforms are being applied to schools across a wide range of circumstances, including schools with less entrenched performance issues. This helps to explain why this reform initiative sits at the high-autonomy or "loose" end of the authority spectrum. However, it specifies its own "loose-tight" balance. In addition, its pairing of empowerment with accountability, its fair funding formula and relentless focus on putting "children first" all resonate with our formulations on more targeted turnaround. And the most recent steps to take the plan districtwide persuade us that the idea of using elements of turnaround strategy as an entry point for larger education reform may not require decades to be realized, after all.

Context

Intervention History

For decades, New York City has experienced waves of reform and restructuring initiatives. The creation in the mid-90s of the "Chancellor's District" was noteworthy within this turnaround context. Under then-superintendent Rudy Crew, the Chancellor's District gathered together a large number of low performing schools from across the city for a host of interventions. Within this citywide improvement zone, centralized

management, rather than local control, was the critical variable used to initiate, enforce and ensure the implementation of school improvement. Just as the Chancellor's District was beginning to show some signs of impact, however, yet another wave of change came over the city.

This most recent, particularly intense period of change began in 2002 when the New York state legislature granted Mayor Bloomberg direct control over the New York City public school system. The mayor appointed Joel Klein chancellor, and together they began a two-stage reform process aimed at radically improving the city's schools. (See more on the driving assumptions of Children First, below.) In the first stage, they focused on bringing stability and coherence to the system. In 2003, the city's 32 community school districts were eliminated. In their place, New York City's 1,400 schools were grouped into 10 regions, each led by an instructional superintendent – so fewer layers existed between principals and the top district administrator. The DOE also adopted a coherent system-wide approach for instruction in reading, writing and math. In a controversial move, these changes swept away the Chancellor's District. Klein maintained that he had expanded implementation of many of the Chancellor's District strategies citywide, while critics say it was a mistake to dismantle such a promising initiative. (Indeed, Miami-Dade recruited Rudy Crew in part to create a similar improvement zone there.)

As part of its reform efforts, the department created the Leadership Academy to train new school leaders and worked with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) to bring major changes to the conditions under which New York City public schools operate. The new contract with the UFT increased starting

teachers' salaries by 43% between 2002 and 2007, and ended “bumping” of junior teachers by more senior teachers, involuntary placements of teachers in schools, and other practices that limited

Those with top ratings will receive bonuses for serving as demonstration sites for others. High-performing schools will also be eligible for additional funds for accepting struggling students from poor-performing schools.

principals' power to choose the teams best suited to serve their student population. It also gave the DOE the ability to create lead teacher positions with differential salaries; added a housing incentive for experienced math, science, and special education teachers; and streamlined the discipline and grievance procedure.

The Chancellor also launched a pilot program called the “Autonomy Zone.” Principals of these schools were given additional decision-making power over programs, personnel, and finances in exchange for signing performance contracts. This program was later expanded into the Empowerment Schools initiative.

Current District Approaches to Restructuring

As part of widespread efforts to achieve system-wide change, there are a number of initiatives specifically aimed at chronically under-performing schools and their populations:

- ▶ **NCLB Restructuring:** For schools formally in NCLB restructuring, NYC uses a variety of strategies described in *The Turnaround Challenge* as “providing help” approaches – providing a range of assistance including capacity-building,

New York's Children First Empowerment Strategy continued

curricular reform, and data analysis, along with support from external providers, without relinquishing management responsibility for the school.

- ▶ Schools under Registration Review (SURR): New York State has a separate process for identifying failing schools under its own accountability system, one of the earliest, most comprehensive and rigorous of such state identification efforts. As with NCLB restructuring (which overlaps), the SURR initiative is primarily using what we describe in the main report as “providing help” approaches with these schools.
- ▶ Close and re-open/new small schools: NYC has aggressively used close-and-reopen to restructure failing schools, often independent of any federal or state mandates. Sixteen large high schools have closed or are being closed, and 185 new small schools have opened the wake of these closures. The small schools range from academically selective schools (one is modeled after Boston Latin), trade schools, and some that focus on general improvement in the City's lowest-performing high school buildings.

As with NCLB and SURR restructuring, NYC has made heavy use of external partners in this work through intermediaries such as New Visions for Public Schools, which has received substantial Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funding for the high school work. An increasing number of schools are run in conjunction with these school support organizations, which function as a partner to principals, providing instructional support and organizational design, but which are not accountable for performance.

- ▶ Charter conversions: Charters and charter conversions may also be used as alternatives for failing schools. Currently there are 60 charters in the City. A traditional district school can apply to the Chancellor to convert the school to a public charter with parental support. The state has nearly reached its

state charter cap (100), but conversions do not count against the cap. In 2005, Klein called for 50 more NYC charter schools by 2009.

- ▶ Empowerment schools and Children First innovations: In addition to the specific restructuring programs just listed, aspects of NYC's Empowerment schools expansion and the entire Children First initiative can be seen to address aspects of underperformance and radical change that in most districts are limited (if they exist at all) to specific programs aimed at schools already identified as failing. This initiative is highlighted below.

Highlighted Initiative: Children First

Overview: The Three Big Ideas

Having addressed stability and coherence in the first phase of Children First (as described in Intervention History above), phase two has moved on to a more radical set of integrated reforms, which its designers feel are needed to reorient education to put children's needs ahead of everything else. These reforms rest on three big ideas: those closest to the students should get to make the key decisions about what will best help their students succeed; empowered schools must be accountable for results; and schools should be able to count on funding that is fair and transparent.

Empowerment: The Heart of the Strategy

At the start of the 2006-07 school year, NYC already had 332 Empowerment Schools, the most tangible embodiment of the Children First approach. In return for agreeing to become accountable for achieving significant gains in student performance, they have:

- ▶ Greater authority over instructional decisions
- ▶ More resources over the course of a four-year performance agreement) and more discretion over spending

- ▶ Fewer administrative requirements
- ▶ Membership in a network of self-affiliated schools supported by an integrated team of instructional and business staff selected by the schools.

These autonomies and support elements, including the required clusters of Empowerment schools, align fairly closely with the recommendations in *The Turnaround Challenge*.

In January, 2007, Mayor Bloomberg announced a significant three-point expansion of “empowerment”:

- ▶ Starting in 2007-8, all schools were given the power to select from three types of School Support Organization: they can become full Empowerment Schools; partner with a Learning Support Organization (LSO) led and operated by four accomplished educational leaders; or choose to align with a Partnership Support Organization (PSO) -one of a number of not-for-profit organizations with a strong record of supporting schools and communities. (More on this below.)
- ▶ The central bureaucracy is being further reduced and resources are redirected to schools.
- ▶ In order to empower school leaders, the district has launched two additional initiatives to give them flexibility to recruit and keep the best teachers: first, to make tenure an earned and deserved honor rather than a right; and second, to provide school leaders with additional support to address poorly performing teachers.

Accountability: Requirements for Empowerment Schools

The accountability system that is at the core of the Empowerment School concept is now being implemented city-wide. The system includes three components:

- ▶ *Clear performance reporting to parents and all stakeholders.* Schools will receive progress reports with a letter grade. They will be ranked with similar schools and compared to the City's best schools. Over time, a school's progress will be measured and reported. The results of Quality Reviews, conducted by teams of experienced educators, will also be reported to parents and stakeholders.
- ▶ *A broader set of tools to accurately measure and analyze student achievement, enabling teachers and principals to adjust instruction accordingly.* Schools will be provided with diagnostic assessments and an achievement data system to track progress and analyze the results of changes in teaching.

“If we want principals to meet the needs of each and every one of their diverse students, then our funding system also must treat students as individuals.”

– Children First

- ▶ *Rewards for strong performance and consequences for chronic low performance.* Those with top ratings will receive bonuses for serving as demonstration sites for others. High-performing schools will also be eligible for additional funds for accepting struggling students from poor performing schools. Schools with “D” and “F” ratings face a four-year cycle of target setting, planning, leadership changes, and ultimate restructuring or closure. The interventions will, according to the January 2007 Children First report, be “aggressive.”

Fair Student Funding

The Children First plan asserts, “If we want principals to meet the needs of each and every one of their diverse students, then our funding system also must treat students as individuals.” They therefore are joining the growing number of school districts that “fund the child.” Under such a system, all dollars follow the student

New York's Children First Empowerment Strategy continued

to the New York City public school he or she attends. Schools receive a base allocation for each child, and additional dollars follow some students, based on their needs. The system is being phased in to preserve core programs and services. The Fair Student Funding system is meant to be equitable, and also easy to understand. The district promises that about two-thirds of a school's budget will be presented on a simple, single page.

A Fundamental Rejection of "Incrementalism"

Given the departure that the system-wide approach of Children First represents, it is perhaps worth noting the assumptions that underlie the approach. The latest installment to the Children First plan explains it this way: "We call our plan Children First, and we mean it. Our goal is to focus everything we do on the only outcome that really matters: student success." Throughout the report, descriptions of one radical systemic change after another are punctuated, like a drumbeat, with the end goal and justification: "Children First."

In a speech to the Partnership for New York City the day after the plan was published, Chancellor Klein summarized the four "simple beliefs" at the heart of the Children First initiatives, past and projected. According to Klein, the plan's framers:

- "fundamentally reject incrementalism" in favor of bold action
- "fundamentally reject the notion that the challenges of urban education are insurmountable in light of failures endemic to our society or the difficult circumstances surrounding the lives of many students"
- "fundamentally reject the notion that we should ask our great educators to succeed with children but deny them the authority and resources to craft the most effective path to success"
- "fundamentally reject the notion that education" is "not compatible with meaningful accountability at every level."

Children First Management Dynamics

Matching Autonomy with Accountability

Children First devolves far more autonomy and budgetary control to individual schools, and in return demands greater accountability for results. The three main components of the accountability regime have been tested in Empowerment Schools and will be applied citywide during the 2007-8 school year:

- ▶ Schools will be graded on the clarity of student performance information provided to parents through tools such as progress reports and quality reviews.
- ▶ A broader set of diagnostic assessments will be utilized four to five times per year to measure and analyze student achievement, as well as to adjust instruction.
 - A powerful Web-based data management system will allow for additional collaboration and customization of instruction.
 - Intensive citywide support and training in the use of data tools is being provided citywide.

All schools are graded on an A-F scale based on outcomes, including year-to-year progress and how well they are doing compared with schools that serve similar student populations. Schools receiving "D" or "F" grades face aggressive intervention, potentially culminating in closure.

Three Flavors of Decision-Making Control

A key to the entire NYC approach is the three levels of school-based control over decision-making described earlier, and the fact that principals were given, this year, the power to choose their desired "flavor." Once again, they include the following:

- ▶ Become an Empowerment School: These schools maintain authority over key educational decisions including instruction

professional development and scheduling. They also have greater discretion over budget, access to significant additional discretionary funding, authority to select their own administrative support team and fewer administrative requirements in return for more accountability for results.

- ▶ Partner with one of the four internal district Learning Support Organizations – distinct, differentiated support organizations.
- ▶ Partner with an external Partnership Support Organization. An RFP process is being used to develop a market of qualified non-profits to provide support.

The first-year choices of NYC principals were released in 2007. Most principals (54 percent) chose to work with one of the internal LSOs. Thirty-five percent chose to become an Empowerment School, and 11% chose to work with a PSO.

Governance

Despite enhanced autonomy, all schools will remain subject to direct public authority and control. The DOE will set the standards and hold schools accountable for achieving them. Responsibility for all employment decisions regarding professional staff, including principals, remains with the DOE. All collective bargaining agreements continue to apply.

Teacher Contracts

The United Federation of Teachers has challenged a number of aspects of Children First. But the union recently was able to come to agreement with the district around some issues, including seniority, length of the work day, and hiring of principals, in

exchange for a pay raise. The district also replaced bumping and involuntary teacher placement with an “open market hiring system” under which more than 3,000 experienced teachers applied for open jobs and were selected by principals for vacancies across the system. Two new initiatives were launched for the 2007-8 school year:

The union recently was able to come to agreement with the district around some issues, including seniority, length of the work day, and hiring of principals, in exchange for a pay raise.

- ▶ Teacher tenure will no longer be routine and will instead be earned. Principals will be required to focus on how they support the development and evaluate the performance of new teachers. Principals’ judgments will be subject to external review.
- ▶ Increased support will be provided to poorly performing tenured teachers. The UFT has already agreed to a new peer intervention program for struggling teachers, and two new support tools will be added.
 - Teams of expert retired principals will observe and make recommendations to struggling teachers.
 - Where remediation fails, principals will be given additional support to remove the lowest performers.

New York's Children First Empowerment Strategy continued

Results to Date

After four years, results from Children First appear promising: improved academic achievement, higher graduation rates, safer schools, more high-quality school options, less bureaucracy, higher teacher salaries, new buildings, and huge increases in private support. Since Bloomberg and Klein took responsibility for the City's public schools:

- ▶ The percentage of fourth-graders passing state reading exams has increased by about 12 points, compared to 4 points in the rest of the state.
- ▶ The percent of fourth-graders passing state math exams has increased by 22 points, compared to a six-point gain by students in the rest of the state.
- ▶ The graduation rate has increased to the highest level in 20-plus years. 60% of students graduated on time in 2006, up from 50.8% in 2002.

An RFP process is being used to develop a market of qualified non-profits and other entities to provide support and technical assistance.

As the Empowerment schools initiative is in its second year of operation, it is still too early to tell how successful it will be in raising student achievement. Empowerment schools recorded baseline data in fall of 2006 and, like all New York City schools, received their first of a new-style graded Progress Report in summer 2007. According to the DOE, the autonomy zone schools upon which the Empowerment initiative is based outperformed citywide averages in their first year (2004-2005), and further

improved upon their past performance before entering the pilot program. In addition, according to the DOE, 85 percent of schools (22 out of 26 participating schools) in the autonomy zone pilot program met their performance targets. (NYC Council, 2007) The Council briefing paper notes that this statistic only takes into account 26 of the autonomy zone schools (rather than the 48 listed in DOE literature), and it is unclear how the remaining 22 autonomy zone schools fared in evaluations.

In the meantime, a recent survey of the pilot Empowerment schools indicates high levels of satisfaction from Empowerment school principals: 92 percent feel the joining "has had a positive or highly positive impact on their school community," 88 percent say one of the benefits is "the increased time they have in school," 90 percent say that "overall classroom instruction has improved," and 95 percent felt that being an Empowerment School has "improved the use of data by teachers to inform instruction." (NYC Department of Education, Empowerment Schools, 2007)

Strengths and Challenges of New York's Intervention Experience

Strong Political Foundation

Clearly, the Children First initiative has benefited from the work of a proactive mayor and chancellor operating in a political context that is particularly conducive to reform. Thanks to the strength of the mayor's and chancellor's power base following Bloomberg's landslide election, the successful conclusion of the transit strike, and, because of term limits, the lack of need to play for re-election, the team has had more latitude than most civic leaders to implement their plans.

Inventive Approach

The roll-out phase of the most “empowering” parts of the initiative has just begun, but the scene-setting districtwide changes were bold in themselves, and the additional bureaucratic reorganizations and distribution of autonomy will – if they proceed as planned – constitute some of the most significant systemic reform underway in any district in the country. The fact that it is taking place in the nation's single largest school district makes it all the more noteworthy. The district was recognized, in fact, as the 2007 recipient of the Broad Prize for districtwide improvement in urban education.

Challenges of Middle Management

According to district observers, the Chancellor has had challenges with district middle management, which has resisted change. However, the DOE culture is reported to have changed substantially over time. In particular, creation of the Office of New Schools – now called the Office of Portfolio Development – is credited with dealing with schools and outside providers in new ways and running interference for them with the wider bureaucracy. This office could serve as a model, in many ways, for the sub-district cluster and special district turnaround office concepts discussed in the main report.

Potential Risks of Streamlining

Empowerment and the resources to fund it have been created by streamlining existing bureaucratic support for schools, so there is some concern that the newly empowered schools may find that they spend more time and money replacing the services and supports they had previously than focusing on children's achievement.

Facilities Challenges

New York City has done more than many other districts to make facilities available, with both an active effort to reopen new schools in old buildings and a \$250 million charter school facilities financing program. Facilities issues still represent a central challenge in many of the restructured new schools, however.

All of the elements of Children First represent a risk. In the words of education historian Diane Ravitch, “No one knows what any of this means.” (New York Sun, June 7, 2007) But as district leaders continually point out, the scale and urgency represented by educational failure in New York City are staggering. The numbers make the challenges facing most states look small by comparison. A total of 140,000 16-21 year old students have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out from current high school classes. More than 60 percent of eighth graders are still not reading or doing math at grade level. The average African American, Latino and low-income high school student performs several grade levels below his or her peers and only one in four of them ends up with a Regents Diploma. If nothing else, the district's initiative certainly has shaken the status quo that contributed to this level of under-performance. Reformers and education leaders in districts and states nationwide will be watching the results of New York's efforts closely.

The districtwide changes, bureaucratic reorganizations, and distribution of autonomy will – if they proceed as planned – constitute some of the most significant systemic reform underway in any district in the country.



Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model: The "Thin-Management" Theory, in Practice

District-Based Turnaround Lab 4: A Blend of District Control and Outsourced School Management

Philadelphia's portfolio of initiatives to turn around its most struggling schools has been closely watched. The early assessment: to date, improvement in general across the range of approaches, with the rate of improvement in the district's cohort of privately managed schools no better than that of the district as a whole, and in fact not as promising as the district's own directly-managed restructured schools.

There are lessons to be learned from what has been called "the nation's largest experiment in the private management of public schools" (Gill, et al, 2007) – but probably not the ones education reformers had wanted to see, at least not yet. Rather than

The district's basic strategy has been to introduce market forces through private contracts, charters, and university partnerships; to provide some intensive district support; and use the state takeover status to increase flexibility from contractual obligations.

providing a true test of "private management," the Philadelphia experience illustrates emerging outcomes of a hybrid governance system in which the district retains significant control over personnel and budgets, while outsourcing to external partners a set of what's been called "thin management" autonomies. The district – spurred by state action after being placed into a form of state receivership – deserves the credit and attention it has

received for conducting some extensive, out-of-the-box experiments. The conclusions that reformers will draw from Philadelphia's portfolio approach will probably differ with their underlying opinions on the outsourcing of school management: proof that it does not work, to some, and proof that the district's hybrid governance model for the outsourced schools was flawed, to others.

Context

Intervention History

Philadelphia's experiment with the private management of public schools began in 2002 when, after years of low achievement and budget crises, the state of Pennsylvania launched a "friendly takeover" of the 200,000-pupil district. District management was turned over to the appointed School Reform Commission (SRC), the chair of which was granted a seven-year term – far exceeding that of the Governor who appointed him. The SRC hired a new chief executive who proceeded to implement wide-ranging reforms, including:

- ▶ Centralized mandatory core curriculum
- ▶ Edison-based system of formative benchmark assessments every six weeks
- ▶ Standardized professional development for teachers based on the formative assessments
- ▶ Extended learning time for struggling students
- ▶ Upgrading the central office human resource function
- ▶ Expanding and rationalizing contractual relationships with fee-for-service providers in professional development and curriculum

In a closely followed move, the SRC also adopted a “mixed provider” model, distributing responsibility for turning around failing schools across a range of partners and sectors, based on the theory that the market forces embedded in this model would improve educational outcomes. (For more on this approach, see below.)

Current District Approaches to Restructuring

A wide range of restructuring initiatives is underway in Philadelphia:

- ▶ K-8 restructuring: Philadelphia is phasing out its middle and junior high schools, creating K-8 schools instead.
- ▶ Small schools: Philadelphia is also opening 66 small high schools (at least 20 of which will be charters).
- ▶ “Sweet 16” schools: 16 schools were provided with additional funding to continue pursuing strategies perceived as successful, but without further intervention or additional support.
- ▶ Charter conversions: 4 schools were designated for conversion to charter status (not all actually became charters).
- ▶ Creative Action and Results (CAR) Region: 21 schools were initially reconstituted and placed into a sub-district called the Office of School Restructuring. This office has been replaced by the CAR region, which contains 12 schools that have not met performance goals for six years and are undergoing a range of district-led interventions, including the appointment of school leaders trained by the University of Virginia’s Darden-Curry School Turnaround Specialist Training Program.

- ▶ The Partnership Model (“private management”): management of 45 schools has been contracted to private managers – see remainder of section.

Highlighted Initiatives: Diverse Provider Options

Diverse Provider Overview

Although not under a single banner like Chicago’s three “Renaissance 2010” models, the last three approaches listed above – the partnership model, charter conversions and the Creative Action and Results Region (CAR) – offer a similar menu of governance options for restructuring chronically underperforming schools.

In general, the partners have “thin” management autonomies. The district still manages each school’s budget, although partnership schools can select services differently than regular district schools.

The district’s basic strategy has been to introduce market forces through private contracts, charters, and university partnerships; to provide some intensive district support; and use the state takeover status to increase flexibility from contractual obligations. The SRC has unequivocal authority to enter into contracts with persons and for-profit or non-profit entities to operate schools and provide educational or other services to schools or to the district. The primary restructuring options pursued include the following:

Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model continued

Partnership Model

Beginning in 2002, Philadelphia outsourced management of 45 of the district's 264 schools to seven external providers from three different sectors:

- ▶ For-profit education management organizations: Edison Schools, Victory Schools, Chancellor Beacon Academies
- ▶ Local Universities: Temple University (Public) and University of Pennsylvania (Private)
- ▶ Non-profits: Non-profit school management organizations, foundations, etc.

All schools in this original partnership model received additional per-pupil funding.

In reality, however, the Partnership School Model did not constitute the radical privatization experiment envisioned by some. Instead, the emphasis has been on partnership, with the district and each of the multiple private organizations sharing responsibility for academic and operational aspects of low-performing schools. Perhaps not surprisingly, there has been significant confusion about responsibility and flexibility. In 2003, the district's second RFP called for collaborative partnerships, within which external providers, rather than managing whole schools, provide a specific service for approximately \$170 per pupil. (Drexel, Eastern, Franklin, Holy Family, Lock Haven, St. Joseph's, the University of Sciences, and K12 Inc won contracts in this round.) In general, the partners have "thin" management autonomies. The district still manages each school's budget, although partnership schools can select services differently than regular district schools. In addition, the district has exerted increasing control over curriculum choices, time, facilities, special education, etc. (For more on district and provider responsibilities, see Management Dynamics section below.)

The partnership model was originally intended to be a "transitional" arrangement providing a bridge to full private management, but it has not evolved in this direction. In fact, since the schools that were served by the district's own Office of Restructuring Schools more or less outperformed most of the Partnership schools (as detailed below in the results section), the district has continued to require many of its district reform initiatives to apply to partnership schools as well.

Creative Action and Results (CAR) Region

The district had also decided to reconstitute 21 low-performing schools, but retain responsibility for their management. These schools were supposed to act as a control group for the externally run schools. The restructured schools adopted instructional and curricular changes such as block scheduling, a core curriculum, and additional professional development. They reduced class sizes and extended learning hours. Some of the schools were assigned new principals and received additional money. After the Office of Restructured Schools, which managed these

In reality, the Partnership School Model did not constitute the radical privatization experiment envisioned by some.

21 schools, was shut down in 2005, the schools mostly dispersed back to their home regions, and a Creative Action and Results (CAR) Region was opened in its place to run the twelve "regular" district schools that have continued to not meet AYP.

More recently, the district has implemented further managed instructional programs that standardize curriculum and instructional models, use data-driven instruction with six-week bench

marks and assessments, increase and standardize professional development, and increase time in ELA and math. The district has also recently moved to a site-selection process, allowing principals, school staff, and parents an expanded role in teacher selection when positions become available. Three-quarters of a school's staff have to agree to sever ties with the district's traditional hiring process to use site-based selection.

Charter Schools

The district converted one school to charter status and granted three schools "pre-charter" status. In parallel to the district restructured schools, additional per pupil funding was allocated to the full-status charter school to implement a variety of reforms. The three pre-charter schools went to external management organizations. (These Talent Development Middle Schools were in fact told they were going to become independent charters, but their teachers balked because of impending removal from the union. Thus, the district called them "transitional charters," allowing them to remain in the district but be loosely managed.)

While chartering was part of the state's and district's plans for diverse providers, its role in the scale of restructuring is not large. All told, Philadelphia has approximately 53 charter schools, but the rest are all new schools chartered by the local school board, separate from the district's restructuring efforts. In any event, Pennsylvania's charter school law does not grant the level of flexibility that laws in many other states do. For example, 75 percent of a charter school's faculty must be certified. Alternate routes to certification are lengthy and difficult. Thus, Pennsylvania charter schools are far more constrained in terms of hiring than those in many other states. District teachers, on the other hand, may transfer to a charter school without losing their seniority, right of return, retirement and health benefits. Charter school staff can bargain collectively, but not as part of the district's regular bargaining unit.

Diverse Provider Management Dynamics

In theory, the three options in the diverse provider spectrum (private EMOs, restructured district schools and charter restructures) should have provided a clearly defined spread of governance, autonomy, and decision-making in Philadelphia. In practice, the niches that would have been occupied by the charter schools are underrepresented in the restructuring arena, and the management dynamics for the private partnerships and district managed schools are more overlapping and complex.

Compared to Miami-Dade's district-directed Improvement Zone approach, Philadelphia's partnership initiative provides a set of models that are midway out on the autonomy spectrum.

Autonomy

The restructured CAR schools are still firmly under district control. As mentioned above, the partnership schools only have autonomy in certain areas, characterized as "thin" management autonomies. Compared to Miami-Dade's district-directed Improvement Zone approach, Philadelphia's partnership initiative (along with potential charter reorganizations) provides a set of models that are midway out on the autonomy spectrum, stopping short of the more extensive authorities provided by Chicago to its Ren-10 schools.

Decision-Making

District-restructured CAR schools are subject to district-mandated reforms, ranging from curriculum to scheduling, professional development, and class size. Some were assigned new principals by the central office. Recently, however, they have been offered the option of site-selection, which allows principals, school staff and parents an expanded role in teacher selection. Three quarters

Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model continued

Delegation of Key Responsibilities for Non-University EMOs In Philadelphia's Partnership Model

Responsibility	Entity Responsible (where responsibility is shared, first entity listed holds primary responsibility)
Provide pre-operating and professional development costs	EMOs
Appropriate operating budget for EMO schools	School District of Philadelphia
Site budget control	EMOs
Provide complete educational model	EMOs
Provide non-curriculum supplies and materials (e.g., paper, pencils, pens, chalk, erasers)	EMOs and School District
Develop school calendar in compliance with district requirements related to number of student days and staff development days	School District
Conduct professional development & in-service training	EMOs and School District
Administer state and local standardized tests	EMOs and School District
Hire, supervise, fire teachers	School District and EMOs
Hire, supervise, fire administrators	School District and EMOs
Provide administrative services (e.g., accounting, payroll, benefits management, human resources)	School District
Conduct capital repairs	School District
Provide security	School District
Supply transportation	School District
Maintain facilities	School District
Abide by all applicable federal, state and local statutes, ordinances, resolutions, and regulations	EMOs and School District
Provide English language learner program	School District
Food service	School District
Furnish/manage technology	School District and EMOs
Enroll all students in home attendance zone (i.e., catchment)	EMOs and School District
Implement district disciplinary policies and procedures (including truancy issues and separate schools and programs for students with discipline problems)	EMOs and School District
Provide special education and related services (except to students labeled "low incidence")	EMOs
Develop and maintain student reports and records (e.g., enrollment, attendance, graduation, dies-enrollment, suspensions, expulsions, transfers)	EMOs and School District
Implement accountability plan	School District and EMOs
Maintain commercial general liability insurance coverage	EMOs

Table from Morando Rim, Lauren, ECS Case Study School Restructuring in Philadelphia: Management Lessons from 2002 to 2005.

of a school's staff must agree to sever ties with the district's traditional hiring process to use site-based selection. Under this option, half the vacancies in a school can be filled by principals instead of the central office.

For EMO partnership schools, decision-making is shared with the district. A summary of how key responsibilities are delegated to non-university EMOs is provided in the table on the opposite page. Many of the university partners actually function as something more akin to professional development providers than whole-school managers.

Governance

The state's takeover of the entire school district is the central feature of the governance picture in Philadelphia. Pennsylvania created the School Reform Commission in place of the school board, and the Governor appoints three of its members. In a unique partnership, the Mayor appoints the other two members. This board then hires the CEO and other district executives.

The district restructuring schools are managed by the district in a regional structure. The partnership schools have shared governance with the EMO responsible for improving outcomes (although they do not have complete control of the factors that contribute to those outcomes) and the district central office ultimately retains responsibility for the schools.

Teacher Contracts

Staff of the 45 partnership schools remain employees of the district. In addition, the 2004 teachers' contract established the option for school-based hiring of new teachers. The SRC won this concession by working hard to gain civic support for hiring and staffing flexibility. State takeover also revoked the union's right to strike. Thus recent reforms have gone a long way toward dismantling cumbersome hiring and seniority rights. The new process may not be completely streamlined and efficient, nor does it

result in equity of staffing quality, but it provides a good deal more hiring flexibility to principals than was the case in the past.

The district also has made impressive gains in hiring and retaining better qualified teachers, according to a range of analyses of the Philadelphia experiments that we reviewed, in part as a result of the introduction of an improved human resources function with a stronger focus on teachers.

Results to Date

Within the district as a whole, performance has improved after four years of effort. The proportion of elementary and middle-school students achieving proficiency in reading and math increased substantially, albeit not spectacularly. From 2001-2002 to 2005-2006, an additional 11 percent of fifth grade students

The new process may not be completely streamlined and efficient, nor does it result in equity of staffing quality, but it provides a good deal more hiring flexibility to principals than was the case in the past.

reached proficiency in reading and 23 percent reached proficiency in math, according to state tests. Similarly, an additional 20 percent of eighth grade students reached proficiency in reading and 19 percent reached proficiency in math.

The four-year gains for Philadelphia's low-achieving schools, however, which include the majority of schools in the district, were generally on par with gains from similar low-achieving schools in the rest of the state (with the exception that Philadelphia's schools out-gained comparison schools in middle-school reading).

Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model continued

Furthermore, according to an analysis published in February 2007 by the RAND Corporation and Research for Action, improvement among students attending the privately managed schools kept pace with, but did not exceed, the achievement gains of students in the rest of the district. While significant academic gains were made from 2002 to 2006 by students across Philadelphia, the elementary and middle schools contracted out did not achieve gains exceeding districtwide trends.

The state takeover established a nimble School Reform Commission that was able to institute reforms quickly and gave then-CEO Paul Vallas the ability to pursue his reform efforts without noticeable bureaucratic delay.

According to Rand, the major findings relating to achievement effects under the diverse provider model in its first four years can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ Privately managed schools (as a group): There were no statistically significant effects, positive or negative, in reading or math, in any of the four years after takeover. Results by provider type (universities, other non-profits, for-profits) show no statistically significant effects; neither do results for individual providers, except for significantly negative results for one provider in math and ELA and another in math.
- ▶ Sweet 16 schools: There were no statistically significant effects, positive or negative, in reading or math, in any of the four years in which they received additional resources.
- ▶ Restructured schools: There were significantly positive effects in math in all three years of implementation and in reading in the first year. In the fourth year, after the ORS

had been disbanded and the schools ceased receiving additional resources, the former restructured schools maintained a substantial (though only marginally significant statistically) effect in math.

Implications of these results, with caveats, include:

1. “Thin management” does not seem to have provided a lever for improvements above and beyond the norm, at least as it has been implemented in Philadelphia. While Jolley Christman, co-founder of Research for Action, contends “our findings show the investment in private management of schools has not paid the expected dividends,” others argue the real problem is that not enough autonomy was given. Advocates for private management of public schools say the approach works best when private managers have full control of campuses and parents decide where to enroll their children — measures that were not fully implemented in Philadelphia. In addition, some contend that the schools most at risk — those with the very worst scores, leadership, and teaching personnel — were chosen to be contracted out, making comparison with those in district restructuring unfair.
2. Philadelphia’s in-district school restructuring efforts seem to have proven more effective than expected. There is some speculation, as mentioned above, that the reason the district’s scores increased so much is because the district farmed out their worst schools to EMOs, letting the district focus on a smaller number of slightly higher performing schools. Some observers say the district placed its strongest principals in the restructured schools and gave them time to prepare for the initial year of work, as opposed to the EMOs, which didn’t receive their contracts until the summer before the initial school year started.

Strengths and Challenges of Philadelphia's Intervention Experience

Benefits of the State's Initial Push

The state takeover established a nimble School Reform Commission that was able to institute reforms quickly and gave then-CEO Paul Vallas the ability to pursue his reform efforts without noticeable bureaucratic delay. However, political, logistical and local pressures still exert significant pressures that shape how initiatives play out (e.g. the evolution of the thin management model). Vallas recently departed to become head of the New Orleans public schools, a move that many attributed at least partly to constant battling over Philadelphia's significant budget shortfalls.

Special Office for Private Management Support

The district established a development office whose purpose is to clear bureaucratic obstacles for external providers. Philadelphia's experience in contracting has confirmed that if a district chooses to contract out services, it should a) allocate time and financial resources for planning and implementing the process of private management; b) hire professionals who are expert in designing and managing contracts (a skill set that is quite new in many regards for public education;) and c) articulate in detail what it requires of the providers (see next point).

The Challenge of Role Confusion

Significant confusion has occurred in Philadelphia around the roles and responsibility of the external providers. In more recent contracts, the district gives more authority to the contractors, and also spells out performance clauses more clearly. Explicit means of assessing provider performance forms the basis for decisions relating to renewing or terminating contracts, as well as providing evidence of accountability to the broader community – a good step forward.

The Costs of Outsourcing

One lesson from Philadelphia's experience is that contracting out services has not resulted in any cost savings. In Philadelphia, the for-profit and non-profit external management fees have been a source of on-going controversy, and have been caught up in the district's overall financial challenges (the district began 2006-7 with a previously unknown \$80 million deficit).

It is possible that the costs of outsourcing in Philadelphia simply reflect the expense of doing reform work. It is also probable that the marketplace among providers here (as is the case virtually everywhere) was not well enough developed to keep initial costs down. The cost of building capacity among the "resource base" of potential external partners is an issue that state and district reformers will need to keep fully in mind, if they pursue such a strategy.



Visualizing the Goal: HPHP Schools in Action

Lessons from High-Performing, High-Poverty High Schools

“One of the big questions facing American education is ‘Can it be done?’ Can schools help all children learn to high levels, even poor children and children of color?” So begins *It’s Being Done*, a new book by longtime education writer Karin Chenoweth (Harvard Education Press, 2007). The biggest question of all, she might have added: can it be done at the high school level?

The answer to that big question, at this point, can only be a very highly qualified “yes.” Few – in fact, hardly any – traditional urban high schools today are bringing most of their high-poverty students to true college-readiness. But an emerging group of high schools – many working within non-traditional operating contexts – are demonstrating that this goal is achievable. These schools represent the proof-point. We had better understand what they look like and how they operate, if we hope to build better pathways for other schools to duplicate their success.

To provide this closer, more granular, view of what successful urban high schools could look like, this section focuses on five outstanding HPHP schools in Massachusetts. This analysis draws on Mass Insight’s extensive knowledge base, constructed over six years of effective practice research on schools in the state that outperform their demographic peers. These exemplary “Vanguard” schools have been visited and analyzed by teams of educators who distilled their strategies into nearly a hundred blueprints of how higher standards work looks on the ground. (The blueprints are available online at www.buildingblocks.org.) The decision to focus on Massachusetts HPHP schools was also guided by the fact that the state is recognized nationally for its advanced, effective approach to standards-based reform, including its oversight of out-of-system charter schools.

The Spectrum of Reform Approaches

As Paul Tough noted in his *New York Times* article “What It Takes to Make a Student,” “when educators do succeed at educating poor minority students up to national standards of proficiency, they invariably use methods that are radically different and more intensive than those employed in most American public schools.” (*New York Times Sunday Magazine*, November 26, 2006) While charters present the prototypical opportunity to use different methods, these approaches are also being achieved in some locations through in-district networks that allow for charter-like behavior (Boston’s Pilot Schools network, as described in the Main Report Part 3, is one example; Worcester’s University Park Campus School, described in these pages, is another), as well as in individual public schools where inspired leadership or special agreements have produced conditions allowing them to take a different tack.

We had better understand what these schools look like and how they operate, if we hope to build better pathways for other schools to duplicate their success.

Out of close to fifty Vanguard schools and districts Mass Insight has studied over the past several years, the five schools that clearly fit the HPHP high school profile – University Park Campus School in Worcester, Lowell Middlesex Charter School in Lowell, and Codman Academy, the MATCH School and Boston Collegiate Charter School (previously South Boston Harbor Charter School) in Boston – all have outstanding records for promoting student achievement and college matriculation despite the significant demographic and environmental challenges faced by their students. (See school profile and performance boxes.)

Mass Insight “Vanguard Model” Profiles of High-Performing, High-Poverty High Schools

Boston Collegiate Charter School (previously South Boston Harbor), Boston, operates under a high-expectations, no-excuses policy for both staff and students. Its highly effective math curriculum, based on essential skills, depth, and frequent assessment, is supported by a series of broader intervention strategies ranging from an especially rigorous homework policy to a merit/demerit system to help shape behavior.

Codman Academy Charter School, Boston, offers an inquiry-based education based on Expeditionary Learning principles and rooted in social justice. While student roam far and wide for neighborhood-based projects, the school ensures the expeditions lead to mastery of state standards, and provides a strong, tight-knit school base.

MATCH Charter School, Boston, manages to close significant achievement gaps for its challenged urban students by providing a comprehensive system of individualized academic support. Intensive daily tutoring is embedded in every student’s schedule, weekly assessments lead to same-day interventions and student-adult relationships are maximized by creatively leveraging extra staffing resources.

Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School, Lowell, serves a particularly at-risk population of 100 high school drop-outs aged 15-21. LMACS helps these students succeed by providing a curriculum that responds to the issues that have derailed their progress, a faculty that is trained in human services, and a highly structured, sequential and mastery-based curriculum within a non-traditional schedule.

University Park Campus School, Worcester, founded on a partnership between Clark University and the city of Worcester, is a small district school that is fulfilling its goal of preparing every student, most of whom arrive performing below grade level, to attend college. UPCS achieves this ambitious goal by integrating a data-driven individualized curriculum within a program that meets the needs of its students and families.

This handful of high schools also stands out (joined by Roxbury Prep, a charter middle school) as very different from all the other Vanguard models we have looked at over the years in the way they operate. First, their approaches and strategies are distinct from all the others – either they simply don’t start from the same constructs and philosophy as others with regard to their students, or, to the extent they do, the elements most vital to the implementation of their ideas fall largely in the “intangible” arenas outside of programs and methods. Secondly, these schools have a different kind of condition set; that is, they work within parameters that provide incentives and rewards largely foreign to prototypical public schools.

Four of the five schools are charter schools, one of which (Lowell Middlesex) exists specifically to serve high school dropouts. The fifth, University Park Campus School (UPCS), is a Worcester public school managed in partnership with Clark University, which shares the crime-ridden Main South neighborhood of the city with it. In presenting these schools we are not proclaiming

that charters are the only answer to high performance in urban areas, nor that charters are necessarily high-performing – although charter schools in Massachusetts are outperforming public schools overall, thanks many feel to effective regulation.

These schools have a different kind of condition set; that is, they work within parameters that provide incentives and rewards largely foreign to prototypical public schools.

We could include, for example, several regular elementary schools and K-8 Vanguard schools that are achieving significantly better outcomes than their demographic peers. The Building Blocks website includes other, traditional high schools that are performing somewhat better than their peer schools. But for this analysis, we wanted to focus on secondary schools that are achieving truly exemplary results despite significant poverty and

Visualizing the Goal continued

other major challenges. They turn out to be charters or (like UPCS) behave in charter-like ways. Their performance carries an asterisk, to be sure, because they serve students who have opted in (though always through a random lottery process). The ways they serve those students should carry no asterisk, however, for all who seek ways to bring highly challenged student populations to high achievement.

The Learning Triangle

While their philosophies and approaches vary, we found HPHP schools adept at producing and managing a dynamic system that depends on three elements, reflected in the Learning Triangle shown here (and described in detail in Part 2 of the main report): acknowledging and fostering students' *Readiness to Learn*, elevating and focusing staff's *Readiness to Teach*, and exercising much more *Readiness to Act* on dramatically different models and approaches than is typically found in public schools. Like the way the combustion cycle works when a campfire grows out of the interplay of wood, air, heat, so do these three "Readiness" elements dynamically combine and interact with each other in HPHP schools to produce a chemical reaction – learning. A number of HPHP schools' "readiness" strategies are explored more fully below.

Readiness to Learn

How do schools re-orient their focus from *what's being taught* to *what's being learned* – and to developing the kind of learning community and approaches that are best suited to the particular needs of the students they serve? This is the dimension in which these HPHP schools differ perhaps most tangibly from all the other Vanguard models. While virtually all of the exemplar Vanguard schools and districts pay attention to relationships, to parent involvement, to creating a positive culture and environment in their schools, the lengths to which the HPHP schools go to address these concerns for their particular student populations set them well apart.

Foster Close Student-Teacher Relationships

"It's the relationship first, always. Then the program, then the facility and everything else. But relationships are what make it all work, so that's what we spend most of our time on."

– Head of School, Codman Academy

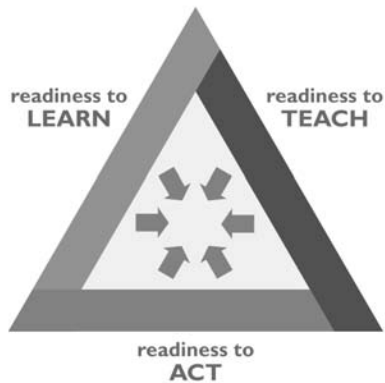
"It's all about personalization – how many adults in the building touch each child."

– Principal, University Park Campus School

First and foremost, these HPHP schools focus on *numerous and intensive adult-student relationships*. School structures are created in such a way as to maximize contact, continuity and support. Several of these schools, for instance, have very intensive *advisory systems*. At the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS), student groups of 15-18 meet twice daily for 30 minutes mid-day and 14 minutes at day's end (with a weekly schedule targeting inspirational readings, ethical topics, work experiences and celebrations of successes on specified days). At Codman Academy, single-sex, multi-grade "crews" of ten students and a faculty member meet twice daily for 45 minutes. The crews stay consistent year to year and are jointly responsible for specific chores, as well as incorporating academic advising.

MATCH and UPC involve all administrators, educators and tutors in a *team approach to student support*, while LMACS also appoints a *student advocate* – a single adult champion to monitor progress, contact parents and otherwise fulfill his or her 14 points of responsibility. Most of the schools cite the importance of *small school size and small class size* as important to relationships, while UPCS was founded as an "early-start" *grade 7-12 school* explicitly for the continuity in adult-student relationships the middle/high school model enables. It also employs a *two-year looping strategy* in order to capitalize on relationships once they are developed.

HPHP READINESS MODEL



Promote the “School as Community” Construct

“We’re competing against a lot of negative pressures these kids have in their lives – crime, drugs, gangs. So in a way, we’re trying to make Codman be the gang.”

– Head of School, Codman

The approaches these schools take involve not only weaving a web of relationships to and from each student but also creating strong community constructs for the school as a whole – stronger than traditional public schools, and many private ones as well. Codman exemplifies this approach, with its fostering of “the Codman way.” The school has developed *all-encompassing rituals and traditions, even its own vocabulary* (with “crews” instead of advisories, “community circle” instead of all-school meeting, etc.) The mandatory Codman *Saturday School program* held ten Saturdays per semester offers group enrichment, which is seen as valuable in its own right, but is also intended to expose students to the Codman culture six days most weeks. “When you are here until 5 pm every weekday and half the day on Saturday, it makes it very difficult to hold on to your old friends and your old life,” explains the principal. “This becomes like a boarding school. We want kids to bond with each other, to keep each other on the right track.”

Other Vanguard HPHP schools like UPCS and SBC have their own versions of these constructs. While less extensive, their constructs are still novel enough for these districts, like Codman, to feel the need for week-long *acculturation programs* prior to the start of the year for entering students.

Make Expectations Explicit – and Enlist Students to Transmit Them

“Fifth graders for the first few weeks are in shell-shock,” because the behaviors that earn demerits were never as closely monitored in their previous schools.

– Principal, Boston Collegiate

The advance acculturation programs also begin the process the HPHP schools use to make explicit their expectations for behavior and academic achievement. LMACS has its “*non-negotiable rules and policies*,” Boston Collegiate has a full *merit and demerit system*, and a weekly individual demerit sheet that travels, along with a class behavior rubric, from teacher to teacher throughout the day.

Codman focuses more on *academic expectations*, which they acknowledge come as a “culture shock” to most entering students. Incoming freshman receive a booklet of advice letters prepared the previous June by students just completing their first year, providing an unvarnished view of what is to come. They also attend a summertime dinner and listen to these now-experienced students talk about the school and its culture of considerably higher expectations. By their first day of class, they have already had significant contact with the school and have heard in meaningful ways what to expect. (See family involvement section below.)

Focus on Psycho-Social Needs

“We just think social/emotional health is vital and that [this work] has to be done. Instead of bus monitors and lunch ladies and paraprofessionals, we have social workers.”

– Head of School, Codman

Educators at these schools generally see their students as motivated to succeed but beset by circumstances that can interfere with their academic achievement. At LMACS, which serves a population of high school drop-outs aged 15-21, all of the full-time faculty have *experience and/or formal training in human services* to enhance their understanding of their students’ challenges. The school also supplements the main curriculum with “*psycho-educational courses*” such as life skills, non-violent conflict resolution and parenting. Codman employs a *full-time social worker* to address the non-academic needs of both the students

Visualizing the Goal continued

and their families, including job training, child care or health services. UPCS also provides *services for parents*, such as GED and ESL programs.

Require Involvement by Parents and Caregivers

“Getting it right from the beginning is so important...

We want to get them talking, telling us the story.”

– Head of School, Codman

Most of these schools require parental involvement – even before students enter. UPCS and Codman both have a *mandatory pre-enrollment meeting*. Codman, in fact, makes three positive contacts with parents before the opening of school. The most important is an extensive intake interview, typically at least an hour with the family, including time with the student and parent/guardian together, and then each separately. The first question is always “Tell me the story of your child’s name.” Head of School Meg Campbell explains: “Names bring up so much: a family history, their aspirations for their child...” The second question: “What are your goals and dreams for your child?” Students are asked to assess their own learning style, strengths and challenges. Parents are asked to comment on the student’s home and life experiences. When necessary, Codman’s social worker helps the family find resources for identified needs.

All the schools *prioritize on-going communication with parents* as well, including weekly calls at MATCH and University Park, and home visits from advisors at Boston Collegiate. While all the schools make significant efforts to attract family involvement, Codman *reinforces their incentives with negative consequences* as well: parents failing to attend required parent-teacher meetings lose the right to subsidized public transportation passes for their child for the following term.

Readiness to Teach

On the surface, HPHP schools’ attention to the *readiness to teach* side of the learning triangle developed for this report looks more similar to the efforts put forth by their colleagues at less challenged schools. Like any school attempting to improve standards, they need to incorporate curricular focus and data-driven differentiated instruction, and to develop effective interventions for students needing special help. And in order to achieve any of this, they need to foster a collaborative teaching atmosphere.

There is, of course, more than one route to successful teaching and learning, particularly given different audiences. These HPHP schools carefully design their instructional programs to ensure that they address the needs of their students. Thus LMACS provides its older, dropout students with a clear, sequential program that is self-paced and focuses on skill mastery. Similarly, Boston Collegiate uses a highly structured math program with in-depth focus on essential concepts and skills and lots of repetition.

Codman, on the other hand, offers inquiry-based expeditionary learning, based around the big questions that require critical thinking, gathering research and working in groups. Yet the school works very hard to ensure that the students are indeed mastering the required learning standards through their projects, and gains a tremendous advantage in terms of relevance as students pursue their learning by interacting with the real world around them.

But on looking closer, it is also clear that the HPHP schools approach the readiness to teach dimension with more intensity than many other schools. This seems particularly true with regard to a few key domains, including sheer time allotted for teaching, the link between frequent assessment and individualized instruction, and human capacity issues relating to their teaching force.

Provide More Time in Which to Teach and Learn

Many of the students at these five high schools arrive up to several years behind grade level in basic skills. Consequently, these HPHP schools spend more time teaching than their standard counterparts. MATCH *extends its “regular” day* to include two mandatory small-group tutoring periods for all. UPCS’s day runs from 8:00 to 4:00, with additional before and after school sessions from 7:30 to 6:00. Boston Collegiate has similarly long hours, along with a longer year (45 weeks for teachers, plus ten paid professional development days). Codman adds *mandatory Saturday classes*.

Individual schools also schedule the time the students have in ways they feel are most productive. LMACS tailors its unorthodox schedule of *late starts and finishes* to its older, less traditional population. Codman schedules in *large time blocks* to allow for schoolwide, class and individual projects. Students are provided one full day a week for site explorations, and two days a month for interning activities. Several other schools use 60 or 90 minute teaching block as well, in order to accommodate individualized instruction. Virtually all of the leaders of these schools stress that they use the extra time not simply to offer more of the same kind of instruction; they use it to construct dramatically different school-day schedules that suit the goals of their school and the needs of their students.

Use Frequent Assessment to Individualize Instruction

“We teach students, not material.” – Teacher, UPCS

While data-driven instruction is a cornerstone of school reform, some of these HPHP schools implement this strategy with a special intensity. Every Friday morning from 8:30 to 9:40 MATCH School students take five *weekly assessments on the material they were taught that week*. Tutors grade the assessment immediately while students attend the Schoolwide Assembly. Students who pass all five parts are dismissed at 11:30; those who pass four out of five are dismissed at 12:30; all others stay until 2:30. This time

is used to provide *immediate individualized intervention* on topics students had trouble with. The assessments also trigger *adjustments to the general instruction* for the following week.

UPCS also collects voluminous data on performance, which it uses to inform instruction. (See next page for a flowchart depicting the school’s approach.) As part of this approach, UPCS students use an *electronic assessment/feedback system* 20 minutes a day to help monitor performance. The program provides *individualized progress reports* that allow both students and teachers to determine where each student needs help.

LMACS developmental math program includes frequent assessments at the end of individualized tutorials, and progress checks are administered to all students every Thursday to assess their understanding. Boston Collegiate also has structured weekly assessments designed to catch problems for individual students before they compound. Even Codman’s expeditionary learning projects have built-in periodic assessments to keep instruction on track and emphasize student accountability.

Pay Extreme Attention to Human Capital

These HPHP schools also do some things differently when it comes to finding and supporting the teachers they connect their students with. Many look for individuals who are particularly *suited to working with the challenging populations they serve*.

LMACS, as previously mentioned, hires only people with *social services experience* or qualifications. Boston Collegiate, like the others, *focuses on the mission* of the school “to prepare each student for college” and makes it clear that this means all students, even if that means teachers need to put in longer hours.

Codman recruits teachers who are motivated to build their own curricula around their interests and those of their students. MATCH takes an unusual approach with its MATCH Corps tutors, recruiting young, highly motivated and accomplished recent college graduates.

Virtually all of the leaders of these schools stress that they use the extra time not simply to offer more of the same kind of instruction; they use it to construct dramatically different school-day schedules.

University Park Campus School

Data Analysis Flow From Data to Intervention

Data	Data Analysis	Interventions
Grades 7, 8, 9, 10		Grades 7, 8, 9, 10
Pre-entrance data from elementary schools – grades 6, MCAS, Portfolio – ELA & Math	All data are discussed and analyzed by all staff (regardless of the subject area)	All incoming grade 7 attend August Academy staffed by 7th-grade teachers – CCC data (A) – continues all year, portfolio data (A) continues all year
Classroom performance / 2 week progress reports (A) Teacher evaluation	Development of shared conversation	2 week progress reports to parents (A)
SAGE reports (district) students identified (A)	Data: Standardized test results, portfolio, classroom performance, CCC data, anecdotal evidence	Group changes/additional class time to facilitate remediation
Raw score MCAS & PTS data for present grade 8 ELA informs MCAS prep	Steps:	AM & PM Homework Centers
IEP's and 504 Accommodation Plans (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define Student (A) • Define Weaknesses (A) • Discuss Interventions 	Parent meetings with specific goals for improvement jointly agreed upon with student & parent (A)
MCAS data for present grade 9 students informs MCAS prep (A)	Student Success Plan (A) UPCS Success Plan (A)	Wednesday schedule change for small group instruction (A)
Interim Reports (A), grades, Teacher Talk, classroom performance	Strong Instructional Leader	Rubric-based classroom work (A)
Interim failure reports (A)	Distributed Leadership	Looping
Report cards	Personalization	Teacher accommodations, learning styles (A)
CCC data	Teacher Intervention:	AM/PM MCAS Homework Center / Clark tutors (A)
Work for Worcester Youth – Summer	Teachers	Phone calls (A)
PSAT Item Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out knowledge about test • Serve on State Curriculum Standard Setting Committees • Serve as MCAS scorers • Serve on state-level curriculum area and test development • Train in Test WIZ technology • Train in portable technology • Explore DOE and Princeton Review web sites • AP Conferences • Presentations 	Web site (A)
MAT 7		Clark programs
Grades 11, 12		Grades 11, 12
PSAT scores, grades, classroom performance		Use of portable technologies
Internship Report (A)		SAT prep time: "Student talk around portfolio," rubric-based classroom work
Community Service Reports (A)		Student-designed path for improvement (A), Tribunals
Clark University grades & professor comments (A)		AP program – looping grades 9-12 (A) developing
Careful analysis of open-ended questions in Math		Faculty visits to internship and Community Service sites
MCAS and SAT 9		Students encourage each other to take Clark classes
Work for Worcester Youth – Summer		Wednesday Schedule – small group instruction Clark Classes

This flowchart shows the extensive process that University Park Campus School in Worcester, MA developed to individualize its analysis of student performance and follow-up teaching approaches. UPCS's strategies to serve its high-poverty student population were studied by Mass Insight as part of its Building Blocks effective-practice research initiative in 2002-3. See www.buildingblocks.org or www.massinsight.org for more.

In return for the mission-focus, the challenges and long hours, however, teachers at these schools say they are offered a *climate of professionalism* and the chance to *focus on teaching* that they might not find elsewhere. All these schools schedule significant *collaborative planning time, mentoring opportunities and elements of creative control*. Where their conditions allow, schools also offer *merit pay and other incentives* (see below).

Readiness to Act

Despite the increasing attention devoted to student-centered learning, in the standard model of public education, bureaucratic imperatives frequently impede action that is truly best for students. At the same time, some of the incentives that shape adult behavior in the traditional system have become removed from the students' interest. In schools that work, conditions allow decisions to focus on student needs and incentives become re-integrated with the "children first" mission. If not for the presence of a different condition set, many of the most crucial ways in which these schools support their students' readiness to learn and their educators' readiness to teach simply would not be possible.

This *readiness to act* dimension of HPHP schools can be seen in two main arenas:

- **Authority over the critical resources: people, time, and money.** The question is: Who has the freedom and authority to make fundamental decisions relating to the use of funds, the allocation of time, and the hiring, firing and deployment of staff? The more clearly that this authority lies in the hands of school or district leadership, the more likely it is that the vision of a school's plan can be fulfilled.

- **Professional human resources approaches and norms.** Public-sector teaching has not kept pace with other sectors in the development of twenty-first century HR norms and approaches. HPHP Vanguard schools, on the other hand, have taken some new and different paths to recruiting, work conditions, professional development, pay and other professional incentives.

Both types of change often require either close involvement and negotiation with unions or a "work around" of union regulations, which is why these types of approaches have tended to emerge within charter and charter-like schools. (The news from these experiments seems to be having some of the intended "lab-

HPHP Vanguard schools have taken some new and different paths to recruiting, work conditions, professional development, and other professional incentives.

oratory" effect. More recently, some districts across the nation have been able to work with their unions to negotiate conditions and financial incentives that re-orient the way schools work. For an example, see the review of New York City's *Children First* report, released early in 2007, and other district experiments in the second section of this supplemental report.) The *readiness to act* dimension of the Vanguard HPHP schools shows up in the following examples.

Visualizing the Goal continued

Authority to Increase and Use Time to Support the Mission

When Principal Rodrigues first began the process of creating a new school, she did a series of “what if” scenarios: What if teachers had more time to plan and collaborate? What if students had more time to learn? What if everyone believed that students could achieve more? And so on. One of the most significant results of this brainstorming was the creation of a radically different schedule – one that would make the most of students’ and teachers’ limited hours, so that both could accomplish more.

– Excerpt from www.buildingblocks.org (UCPS strategy)

As evidenced in the learning and teaching strategies summarized above in the readiness to teach section, many of these HPHP schools’ more intensive approaches require longer school days and longer school years. This is necessary both to increase the amount of time available for student learning, and to increase the amount of time available for teacher collaboration and development.

In the charter schools, longer hours are incorporated into the teacher contracts from the start. At UPCS, it all started with some out-of-the-box thinking based on designing a school

Ultimately, the union approved the new school largely because 1) the steering committee was careful to involve the union in ongoing dialogue, and 2) all parties agreed that the school would be carefully monitored.

around what students (and staff) needed, as described in the box at the top of this section. When the school was launched, the official school day ran from 8 am to 4 pm, and before- and after-school programs kept the school open from 7:30 am to as late as

6 pm. Like all aspects of the school’s programming, the longer day was approved by both the school committee and the local teachers union. The school did, of course, have to pay for these hours; teachers received 19% additional compensation because of the extended day. (Note: Due to budget cuts in more recent years, UPCS had to cut back on its longer day. The principal will continue to offer before- and after-school programming, but regular school hours were considerably trimmed.)

These high-performing, high-poverty schools also use unorthodox scheduling to achieve a number of their other teaching and learning goals. Some, like UPCS, use longer blocks to give teachers more time to delve deeply into topics and develop project-based units. (It also means less time is lost shuffling from one class to another). Others, like MATCH, rearrange teaching to carve out time for weekly assessments. Codman accommodates the on-site explorations throughout the city that are so central to its learning approach. None of these would be possible without the freedom and authority to tailor scheduling and the use of time to students’ needs.

Authority to Choose Staff Best-Suited to the Mission, and Freedom to Offer Them Incentives

“There is no question that the success of [Boston Collegiate] ... would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the school’s educators.... But in return they enjoy a very professional environment – one that sets clear expectations and rewards performance.” Excerpt from www.buildingblocks.org (South Boston Harbor Academy [now Boston Collegiate] strategy.)

Charter schools are free from the types of union restrictions on hiring, firing and allocation of staff that cause the most difficulty for instructional leaders attempting to bring about a radical culture change within a school: seniority, “bumping” and “force placing.” The absence of such practices and the use of open recruiting or open posting of teaching positions can

go a long way to helping bring in teachers who are focused on student achievement.

Again, UPCS, as the only district HPHP school in our group, had to pursue similar ends through the system. In this case, the union proved to be a largely willing partner in the development of the new school. A clause in the union contract states that changes to the contract could be made with a two-thirds faculty vote. This allowed the principal to choose staff based on more than just seniority in the Worcester Public Schools. Ultimately, the union approved the new school largely because 1) the steering committee was careful to involve the union in ongoing dialogue, and 2) all parties agreed that the school would be carefully monitored.

Where possible, several of these HPHP schools also let pay reflect merit. Boston Collegiate, for example, has the ability to vary pay according to the merit of each individual. The starting salary of a Boston Collegiate teacher is typically higher than that of a BPS teacher, but salaries also plateau sooner. In strong budget years, teachers might receive anywhere from a four to a ten percent pay rise. However, in tight budget years, raises are less substantial.

Readiness to Increase Resources to Implement a More Intensive Approach

“MATCH School has moved to an atypical “resource-raising” approach...[It] invests in building relationships with potential private sector partners and funders.... Promotion of its successes initiates a “virtuous cycle” that leads to further interest and funding.” Excerpt from www.buildingblocks.org (MATCH strategy)

As we have seen, turning around learning for students with significant poverty and related challenges requires something more, and something substantially different from what may work adequately well with less challenged students. Not surprisingly, it can also require significantly more resources.

Under standard public school district allocations, such funds are often not available. Schools with the freedom and authority to pursue funds from other sources have often been the ones that have been able to work out ways to make their child-centered vision a reality. Several of our Vanguard HPHP schools have been particularly resourceful in finding additional funding or other in-kind resources to enable the intensive approaches they take with their students.

Rather than living within typical resource allocation limits, for example, MATCH School has moved to an atypical “resource-raising” approach — expanding adult support and raising additional financial resources through both working and funding partnerships with the public and private sectors. They expanded adult support resources by developing their MATCH Corps of recent college graduates to fulfill the need for intensive tutoring that they could neither fund the teaching staff for, nor leave to volunteers. They entered into partnerships with local universities and nearby high schools. They also looked to a range of public financing options (such as leveraging Federal Tax Credits to secure funding for a new construction) as well as to drawing additional funds from private sector companies and private philanthropies.

UPCS has been able to leverage its partnership with Clark University to increase its resource pool. Codman also collaborates with a wide variety of organizations and individuals to bring inquiry-based learning to life for its students. From small-scale partnerships (the *Boston Globe* delivers free newspapers to each freshman’s home every weekday), to larger, multi-year collaborations (the Huntington Theater hosts ninth and tenth Codman students every Friday from October to June), the school puts untiring effort into identifying the resources necessary to make the school experience active, engaging, and relevant to students’ lives.

Several of our Vanguard HPHP schools have been particularly resourceful in finding additional funding or other in-kind resources to enable the intensive approaches they take with their students.

Poverty's "Perfect Storm" Impact on Learning and the Implications for School Design

Three colliding factors = a hurricane of challenge

Schools in the bottom five percent of achievement – the focus of *The Turnaround Challenge* report – predominantly serve high-poverty student enrollments. While the research linking poverty to low achievement could not be clearer, it also offers insight into potential counter-measures. If we can identify the specific challenges that poverty tends to throw against the pursuit of higher achievement, we can (as high-performing, high-poverty schools are demonstrating) create strategies specifically designed to meet those challenges.

That is the focus of this section of the Supplemental Report. Its resources are organized in several parts:

1. An expanded description of the many poverty impacts that comprise the "perfect storm" introduced in Part 2.3 of the main report;
2. A roster of several key studies and reports on poverty and low achievement (see box); and
3. Snapshots of alarming demographic trends of poverty in the United States and their growing impact on schools (throughout).

Poverty's "Perfect Storm" Impact on Learning: An Expanded Analysis

The effects of poverty on student performance are deep, wide-ranging, and complex. Poverty-related risks are direct and indirect, occur at the individual, family, neighborhood and community levels, and affect cognitive development and academic performance. They jeopardize both intellectual readiness to learn and social readiness to participate in classroom life. Moreover, one effect of poverty can compound others, increasing the likelihood that high-poverty students in high-poverty

schools in high-poverty neighborhoods will find it difficult to perform to the standards of their better-off counterparts. And the fact that poverty-related risks start from before birth means that even if school systems can find ways to help high-poverty students develop at the same rate as their more privileged counterparts, these students will remain behind their peers due to a disadvantaged starting point.

Poverty is not an excuse for acceptance of low student achievement. The point of this dimension of *The Turnaround Challenge* is that learning more about poverty's serious and complex influences helps us understand how to address them. Indeed, recent studies in fields ranging from brain-based learning to sociology and psychology confirm that enhanced understanding of the workings of poverty's perfect storm can be used to design well-informed and carefully constructed interventions that improve the chances of closing the gaps created by poverty. Early studies show encouraging instances of appropriate interventions resulting in cognitive catch-up, and detail how changes in economics and environment can make up for early environmental deprivation – sometimes within the space of a few short years.

While the results of a few interventions are mentioned within this section, we concentrate here on understanding poverty's perfect storm, leaving analysis of various reform strategies to other sections of this report. However: this analysis will help explain why existing mild interventions in chronically underperforming high-poverty schools have not produced much improvement in student performance. Addressing the needs of

"It was 'the perfect storm' – a tempest that may happen only once in a century – a nor'easter created by so rare a combination of factors that it could not possibly have been worse."

– from *The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea*, by Sebastian Junger (1999)

high-poverty students in high-poverty settings is bound to be a very demanding task, one that is very different from increasing performance within other types of schools and communities. Again: what this section *doesn't* provide is an excuse not to tackle the task at all, or to continue to pursue the same types of reforms that have failed to substantially improve chronically

under-performing high-poverty schools. Instead, it provides a set of parameters that buttress the points made in the main *Turnaround Challenge* report and earlier in this Supplemental Report: that failing, high-poverty schools need much more than incremental change. They need a fundamental rethinking of all of the ways they serve their high-need students.

New Research Is Pinpointing Poverty's Most Critical Impacts

The current decade has seen an explosion of research on poverty's role in our schools and the lives of young people. On the one hand, No Child Left Behind has generated a mountain of valuable statistical data on the patterns of poverty and low achievement. Concurrently, cognitive and social scientists are constructing a deeper and more profound understanding of poverty's devastating effect on childhood and personal development, and in some cases, what can be done about it.

Several resources are particularly useful in providing a cogent overview of current factors and suggesting research and resources for further study. More complete reference information can be found in the reference section of the main report, or the resources section at the end of this Supplement.

Paul Tough: *What it Takes to Make a Student* (New York Times Sunday Magazine. (November 26, 2006)

This article looks at the political history and research on efforts to close the achievement gap between poor/minority students and wealthier/white students. The author concludes that we have the means and strategies to close the gap, but questions whether we have the collective public will to do so.

Karen Pellino: *The Effects of Poverty on Teaching and Learning* (2001)

A reading specialist in a high-poverty New York school, Pellino captures the effects of poverty in real classrooms, with real teachers struggling to assist real children. An outstanding introduction for practitioners and policymakers alike.

Martha Farah et al: *Poverty, Privilege, and Brain Development: Empirical Findings and Ethical Implications* (2006)

This team of neuroscientists summarizes recent research on the relation between poverty and children's cognitive development. Their reference list is a valuable conduit to other research in this field.

David Berliner: *Our Impoverished View of Education Reform* (2006)

This highly-respected education researcher connects the dots from many fields of research to provide a stunning and sobering profile of poverty in our schools. While we greatly admire his analysis, we depart from one of his conclusions that "poverty places severe limits on what can be accomplished through school reform efforts;" instead, we believe that school reform must be expanded to encompass mitigations of poverty's effects – hence the HPHP Readiness Model presented in the main report.

Jean Anyon: *What "Counts" as Educational Policy? Notes towards a New Paradigm* (2005)

Anyon argues that the problems of urban education are nested in underlying social policies and inequities, and that our success in solving the achievement gap lies in redefining education policy by making schools the hub of a new, broad "policy alignment" that recognizes and attacks poverty and poor schooling as two facets of the same problem.

Richard Rothstein: *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* (2004)

Rothstein seeks to explain how social class differences are likely to affect the academic performance of children. Of particular interest is his unvarnished assessment of some of the better publicized reform initiatives.

Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom: *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* (2003)

A close, data-driven look at cultural impacts on achievement, with a focus on schools that are successfully mitigating those impacts.

Waxman et al: *Review of Research on Educational Resilience* (2003)

The authors discuss a crucial area of research: the resiliency demonstrated by students who succeed despite very adverse conditions.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY RISK FACTORS

Storm #1: How Poverty Undercuts Children's Readiness to Learn

One thing is clear: the academic achievement levels of poor urban students are markedly lower than those of their counterparts in suburban and rural schools. This is not at all to suggest that poor urban students are inherently less intelligent.

Rather, a wide body of research shows that persistent and extreme poverty, and related social, environmental, and psychological factors (some parallel and some secondary), affect both the cognitive development and school achievement of individual children.

(Anyon, 2005)

The picture is complex even at the individual and family level, and it is perhaps important to capture a cross-section of the main risk factors to understand that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Children of poverty are not nearly as prepared as the non-poor to enter the classroom.

Before kindergarten, they already test lower on assessments of cognitive skills. They come from families that face grave economic scenarios, and endure both physical

and psychological factors that limit their ability to thrive. Health and safety risks can often overshadow the need for higher order thinking skills, and parent and familial modeling often fail to encourage children to focus on school. In addition, high-poverty

students often suffer from poor self-image, or are influenced by stereotypic behaviors that thwart goal-setting and their desire to succeed. One factor compounds another; as students who are not at risk continue to develop and progress on a higher trajectory, poor students fall even further behind.

The more we discover about poverty's perfect storm, the more opportunity we have to design focused, effective interventions that can break longstanding trajectories of risk.

Taken together, these individual and family risk factors go a long way to explain the persistence of current underperformance. But *the more we discover about poverty's perfect storm, the more opportunity we have to design focused, effective interventions that can break longstanding trajectories of risk.* Recent research on a number of the risk factors confirms that some risk can be mitigated. While recognizing that many of the factors are interrelated, we will identify several of the most important strands in the following sections.

Developmental Readiness and School Readiness

The impacts of divisions between rich and the poor, urban and suburban, at-risk or not, begin at birth and are reinforced daily by a child's surroundings. While both the causes and manifestations of these disadvantages are difficult to disentangle, many researchers make a distinction between a child's readiness to learn, or "developmental readiness," and his or her readiness to enter the classroom, or "school readiness."

What Does "At-Risk" Really Mean?

The term "at-risk" is widely used to describe children, families and communities based on a variety of indicators, yet our survey of the research indicates that there is no consistent definition used by providers, funders, policy makers, or media.

Generally speaking, though, primary measures for risk include:

- **For children:** limited reading proficiency, abuse or trauma experiences, disability or illness, or exhibition of behavioral problems (Anderson).
- **For families:** poverty, low parental education level, increased numbers of children per household, lack of home ownership, single parent households, welfare dependence, substance abuse and/or physical abuse, mental or physical illness, or other family dysfunction.
- **For communities:** neighborhood poverty, crime rates, unemployment rates, and the number of teen parents.

Whatever the specific metrics used for risk at each level, it is clear that a large percentage of students in chronically under-performing schools will be "at-risk" at two or at all three levels.

Developmental readiness indicates the cognitive development level at which a child is ready to undertake learning specific tasks. *School readiness* refers to readiness to enter the classroom and access the instruction taking place. It incorporates the level of physical, emotional, and social development necessary for a child to succeed in the classroom. There is general acceptance of the broad categories that contribute to “school readiness,” but to date, there is little agreement among researchers and educators as to precisely which characteristics constitute school readiness – or how to measure them. Few tools exist to measure this type of readiness for individual children. (Anderson, 2006) That presents a challenge to schools serving high-poverty schools with high percentages of children who may not be school-ready when their age implies they should be.

Health Risks and Brain Development

Inadequate nutrition and insufficient access to a proper diet are among many of the health risks associated with children living in poverty. Children who do not ingest either the volume of food or the nutrients necessary each day are at risk for slowed brain development and chronic stress on the body. (Given, 1998) Other health risks include lack of safety, inadequate medical care, teen pregnancy, and increased infant mortality, to name a few. Other health factors, such as low incidence of breast-feeding and high rates of childhood disease, premature births, and low birth weights, all affect the a child’s growth and cognitive and physical development.

There are also health risks that cause additional problems because they go undiagnosed from an early age. Recurring otitis media, for example, is linked to hearing impairments, slowed language development and reading problems in school. The disease is not a product of poverty, but the number of cases that go undiagnosed and the number of children who do not receive treatment is affected by poverty and the lack of access to health

care. (Berliner, 2006) Similarly, while lead poisoning is on the decline, some 450,000 children between the ages of one and five, mostly poor and mostly of color, still have enough lead in their blood to cause cognitive damage. (CDC, 2004)

Family Economic Hardship

Over 30 percent of urban students live in poverty, with 42 percent eligible for free and reduced lunch, compared with 18 percent of suburban and 31 percent of rural students who are similarly eligible. (Anyon, 2005) The figures for students in chronically failing schools targeted for turnaround are even higher.

The implications of this type of economic hardship for students’ families are far-reaching. Parents often move from one location to another in search of work, which contributes to a high level of mobility among poor, urban students. Parents can rent weekly, even daily in some places, while job hunting or dealing with other personal, social, or family issues. Frequent moves have strong academic and social consequences for students, who transfer from one school to another, often unaccompanied by records or concrete information that can be passed on to the student’s next teacher. (Pellino, 2001)

Lack of resources also contributes to poor families’ inability to access high quality day care and pre-school. Children from high-poverty families enter school without the advantages of enriched pre-K learning environments.

Research suggests, however, that even small increases in the incomes of poor families can improve student performance. (Anyon, 2005) These increases enhance cognitive development, and may also improve the likelihood of future success in the workforce. One study, for example, found that income supplements as small as \$4,000/year improved school achievement for elementary students by 10 to 15 percent compared with students in the control groups.

Inadequate nutrition and insufficient access to a proper diet are among many of the health risks associated with children living in poverty.

How Poverty Undercuts Readiness to Learn continued

Another study by Dearing, McCartney, and Taylor (2001) followed poor and non-poor families and tracked their income-to-needs ratios. The study found that poor families who were able to move up in socio-economic status had children whose test scores and academic performance resembled that of non-poor

students. In other words, they were able to overcome their cognitive deficiencies from earlier in life. (Berliner, 2006) The researchers also found that psychiatric symptoms associated with poor children were nearly eradicated by the fourth year after moving out of poverty. The general conclusion is that reducing poverty helps children succeed in school and beyond.

Other studies have also found that increases in family income result in better school attendance and achievement (Salkind & Haskins, 1982), and that additional income from work assistance programs results in improved achievement and behavior (Huston et al, 2001). All of this seems to indicate that changes in income can have a positive impact on student achievement, cognitive ability, and related at-risk factors.

Frequent moves have strong academic and social consequences for students, who transfer from one school to another, often unaccompanied by records or concrete information that can be passed on to the student's next teacher.

Parenting Style

Parenting and family atmosphere play a significant role in child development. Children from more well-off homes usually have families who encourage child development through activities such as visiting museums and other cultural outings, taking music lessons, and participating in group athletics, to name a few.

That much is obvious. But the difference in the home environment is most noticeable at two points – in the years before school starts and during the summer months for school-age students. Berliner notes that “Children of the poor consistently

Poverty Facts Shaping Education Today

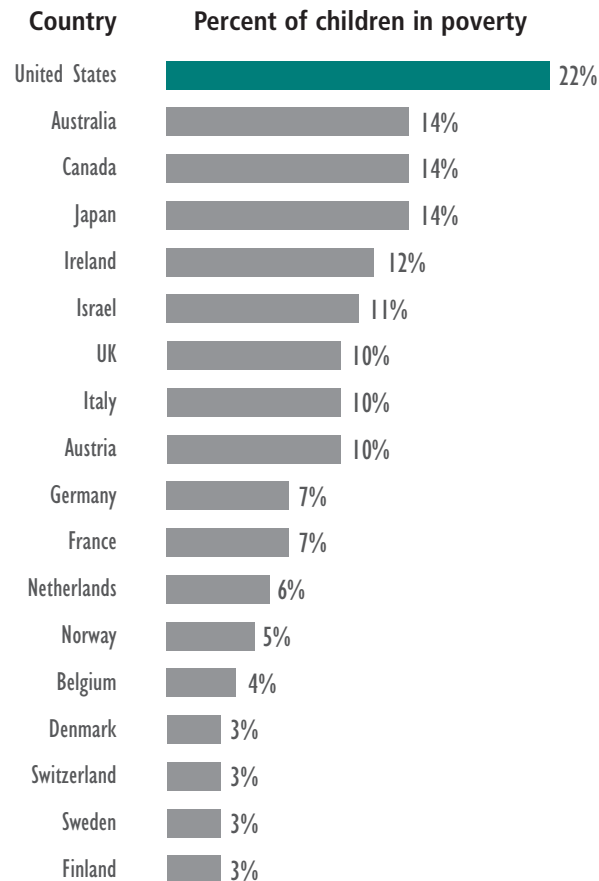
Fact #1: We have more child poverty than anywhere in the developed world

Nearly 13 million US children live in poverty (NCCP 2006) – more than 1 in 5 overall, more than 1 in 4 Hispanic Americans, and more than 1 in 3 African Americans. Extreme poverty and long-term poverty are both substantially higher than in other developed countries (Berliner)

Our lack of educational competitiveness in the world is the direct product of how poorly we educate poor and minority students: the scores of white students would rank 2nd in reading, 4th in science, and 7th in math, while minority students would rank last in all three categories.

The number of children living in poverty increased by more than 11% between 2000 and 2005 (NCCP 2006).

Child poverty in US is the highest among 18 developed countries



show greater learning losses over summer than do children of the middle class (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay & Greathouse, 1996). Middle-class children apparently get a much more nutritious cultural and academic diet during the summer than the poor. This results in middle-class children gaining in reading achievement over the summer, while lower-class children lose ground.” (Berliner, 2006)

Participation in these activities is less common among lower income families, partly due to economic and logistical constraints, but also possibly due to different expectations formed by the parents’ own educational experiences. Sixty-two percent of children from low income families have parents who have never attended college, and some 82 percent of children whose parents have less than a high school diploma live in low-income families. Yet when parents have at least some college, the figures decrease significantly – only 24 percent of children with parents who have attained some college education live in low-income families. (NCCP, 2006)

Living in poverty, and the emotional and psychological strain that go along with it, have also been shown to affect parenting style in ways that can directly impact cognitive growth and student achievement. (Pellino, 2001) In particular, processes of language development and use, and parental attitudes toward life and success – both strongly related to student performance – have been shown to vary significantly by economic status.

Recent research indicates a strong correlation between economic status and language use and acquisition, which appear to contribute to disparities in cognitive development. One longitudinal study tracked 42 families with newborns and researched each child’s language development along with each parent’s communication style. Results indicated that children with parents who were professionals were exposed to greater vocabulary and knew

over 1,100 words. The other end of the spectrum included children whose parents were on welfare. These children retained an average of 525 words. The IQ scores between the professional group and the welfare group were also strikingly disparate: the average IQ for the children of professionals was 117; for the welfare group, it was only 79. (Tough, 2006) In explaining the cause

One assessment determined that the cognitive scores of children entering kindergarten from the highest socio-economic group are 60 percent greater than those from the lowest.

of these differences, researchers noted that the parents from the professional group spoke about three times more words or utterances per hour than those from the welfare group.

In addition, the same study also concluded that a far higher percentage of the parental utterances heard by children of professionals were words of encouragement, while the welfare parent group relied heavily on discouragements and prohibitions. In general, parents in more affluent homes appear to have been more sensitive to children’s viewpoints, more encouraging, less intrusive, and less detached. These parenting behaviors help increase both IQ and school readiness. (Tough, 2006) Parents of working class and poor families generally appear to apply parenting strategies that are less structured, and reinforce more of a leader and follower mentality, in comparison to the more collaborative home environments in the middle class families. While there are apparent strengths in both approaches (the working class and poor children were allowed more free time, and seemed to be more autonomous and less bored or stressed), research shows that the middle-class children

How Poverty Undercuts Readiness to Learn continued

acquired and retained more of the life skills that were likely to help propel them toward success in school and the workplace. (Lareau, 2003)

Studies focusing on children as they first enter school confirm that by the time children are of school age, there is a strong correlation between cognitive ability and socio-economic status. One national assessment, conducted in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education, determined that the cognitive scores

of children entering kindergarten from the highest socio-economic group are 60 percent greater than those from the lowest. (Anyon, 2005) Such research has helped to fuel substantial interest and investment in early childhood education and an emerging focus on the critical “zero-to-three” years of brain development. It has not, however, produced strong consensus regarding the best ways for schools to work with students arriving, completely unprepared for formal schooling at age five or six.

Student Motivation

There are a number of ways in which both poverty itself and its resultant parenting styles can help undermine student motivation to learn. These range from the reality of job scarcity that awaits poor urban youth, to the corrective and discouraging tones more often employed by their parents. Research has shown that in many cases, poor students come to the classroom already programmed with a poor self-image. (Ciaccio, 2000)

Problems with self-image can of course be aggravated by stereotyping. Anyon (2005) reports that many students of color are influenced by stereotypes of African American and Latino students as incapable of academic excellence, disinterested in school, and responsible for their own lack of achievement. This stereotyped expectation thwarts motivation and prevents students from fully engaging in school for fear of both failure and fulfilling the stereotype.

Additionally, according to Caine (2000), many poor children suffer from a phenomenon called “downshifting.” This occurs when one’s biological response is to focus on survival needs. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, if individuals’ safety and security needs – such as food and a safe place to live – are not met, then they cannot focus on anything other than attain-

Poverty Facts Shaping Education Today

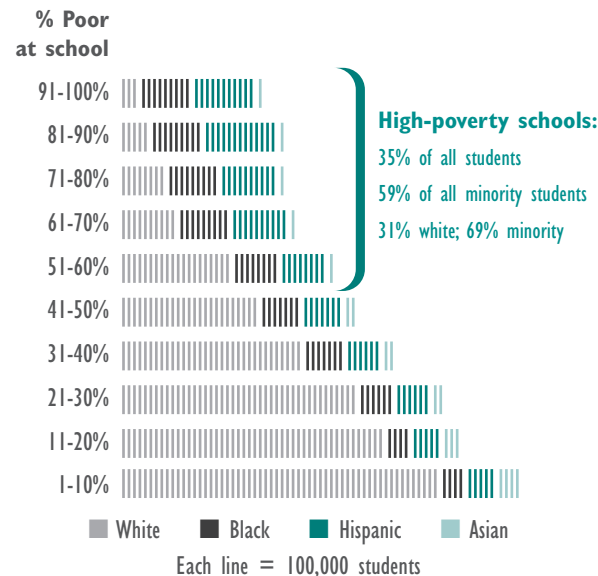
Fact #2: The extreme stratification of school populations by poverty and race/ethnicity is becoming more so

Today, over 60 percent of Hispanic and African American students attend high-poverty schools (>50% poor), compared to 30 percent of Asians and 18 percent of whites (Table 7, Orfield & Lee, 2005)

Despite four decades of research about the relationship between concentrated school poverty and low achievement, there has been a pattern of deepening segregation for the poor and minority since the 1980s (Orfield & Lee, 2005).

Although half of all poor people and nearly as many minorities now live in the suburbs, their children, like those in the inner cities, are growing up largely in high-poverty neighborhoods and attending high-poverty schools. (Orfield & Lee, 2005)

Distribution of all K-12 students by level of school-wide poverty



ing what is necessary for survival. For a child of poverty, when their brains downshift (because, for example, the path they travel to school is dangerous), they are literally only able to focus on survival. Downshifting can contribute to a sense of helplessness, low self-esteem, fatigue, unresolved emotional issues, volatility, and defiance.

A related issue involves difficulties with the teacher as an authority figure. Raised in home environments more likely to reinforce direct and punitive authority, students from low-income families are more likely to maintain resistance toward teachers and their authority. This can lead to an inability to handle even benign, constructive criticism or to view the classroom as welcoming and engaging in any way. (Pellino, 2001)

What's required is a reorienting of the education model that takes squarely into account the learning and behavioral deficits that poverty inflicts on so many of students they serve.

As a result, as documented by Mather (2002), poor children demonstrate more frequently than affluent children the following characteristics in school: dislike of authority, disorganization, physical aggression, open displays of emotion, and the view that discipline is more about penance and forgiveness than change, to name a few. Other academic and behavioral problems include delays in language development, violence, social withdrawal, substance abuse, and depression. (Pellino, 2001).

Our examination of high-performing, high-poverty schools highlights these schools' relentless focus on students' *readiness to learn*. In some ways, that phrase (and that analysis, found in Part 2 of the main report) can serve as a summary of poverty's impact on individual children and, consequently, on the strategies successful schools use to educate these students effectively. Though there are always exceptions, in general poverty dramatically undercuts students' readiness to learn. High standards, demanding curricula, and appropriate performance tracking are all important elements in serving children of poverty, but they are not sufficient. As the HPHP schools demonstrate, what's required is a reorienting of the education model that takes squarely into account the learning and behavioral deficits that poverty inflicts on so many of students they serve.

Storm #2: How High-Poverty Environments Complicate Schools' Mission

As if the challenges of individual and family effects weren't enough, children of poverty face additional layers of risk. "Compositional" effects, such as the community into which one is born, or the neighborhood in which one dwells, also have a deeply significant impact on a child's educational experience and performance in the classroom. Being born into a wealthy suburban community or inner-city ghetto correlates strongly

The Influence of the Neighborhood

There is much research to indicate that living in poor neighborhoods increases the odds of gang involvement, behavioral problems, dropping out of school, and teenage pregnancy. (Lipp, 1996) While students spend an average of 1,000 hours per year in school, they spend nearly 5,000 hours per year out and about in their communities and with their family. This suggests that children are gaining the bulk of their influential experiences in their surrounding neighborhoods. (Berliner, 2006) Neighborhoods help establish the standards and norms under which children operate with regard to achievement and expectations, as well as basic behavioral norms.

Researchers have investigated school achievement levels for children with similar academic and familial backgrounds, but who live in neighborhoods with different levels of deprivation. The outcomes confirm that educational attainment does differ based on zip code. In fact, one's zip code or neighborhood is just as likely, current figures show, to determine student success as familial influence. (Berliner, 2006) The achievement records of the high-performing, high-poverty schools demonstrate that zip code need not sync with student success – but right now, that is the norm.

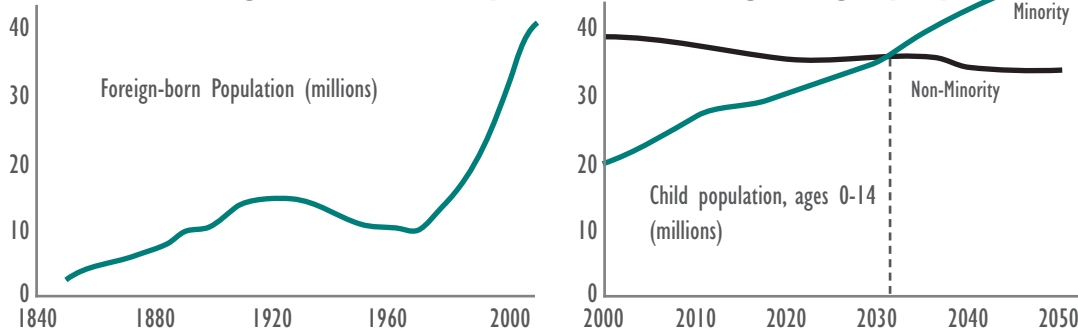
The importance of community and school context is underlined in a number of studies focusing on the performance of poor, inner city students who attend schools in middle class suburbs. Studies in Boston, St. Louis, and Chicago, for example, all found that the students had higher achievement levels, greater college attendance rates, and generally had more success than their counterparts who remained in poor, inner city schools. All this is suggestive of the power of both neighborhood and school to influence the direction and success of students' lives, even when they carry with them the cognitive lags and ingrained disadvantages of having grown up in poverty. (Berliner, year) And it parallels the experience of the high-poverty-high performance schools cited in the next section of this report that achieve significant success by providing "suburban"

Poverty Facts Shaping Education Today

Fact #3: The powerful impact of immigration on public education is only beginning

- The most severe dropout problems are in segregated high-poverty (>50%) schools; one-third of such schools graduated less than half of their class of 2002 (Orfield & Lee, 2005)
- 74% of the children of high school dropouts are low-income today, compared to 64% in 1985. Conversely, low-income status occurs for only 16% of the children of parents with some college experience.

Immigrant and minority enrollments are growing rapidly



with whether a student is likely to graduate from high school and attend and graduate from college. This is the second of poverty's perfect-storm triad of impacts: the neighborhood and school environment in which children of poverty grow up.

High-poverty urban students are more likely to change schools more frequently, less likely to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities and athletics, less likely to come from a two-parent home, and less likely to have a parent who is employed full time.

school conditions and expectations, and extend time and services that enrich their students' out-of-school-day environment.

There is additional evidence to suggest that a move from high-poverty to low-poverty neighborhoods not only increases the likelihood of success in school, but decreases teens' chances of being arrested and committing violent crimes. The numbers indicate that teens moving out of high-poverty communities are arrested less and commit 50 percent fewer violent crimes. (Anyon, 2005)

The Influence of the School

Alongside all of the overlapping factors (largely originating outside of school) that determine students' at-risk status, the poverty context of the schools that children attend has a significant impact as well. In fact, some studies have indicated that school poverty level is more strongly related to student achievement than individual family poverty level. In other words, students in a high-poverty school are likely to be less engaged, put forth less effort, and have lower aspirations than students from high-poverty families who attend a more affluent school.

To understand the context and impact high-poverty schools generally seem to have on the students they serve, it is important to understand where these schools are located – and what challenges they present to students and the adults working in them alike. Urban students are more likely than rural or suburban students to be enrolled in schools that have poverty concentrations greater than 40 percent. While 10 percent of suburban and 25 percent of rural students attend high-poverty schools, 40 percent of urban students receive their classroom instruction in these high-poverty schools.

Hidden in these statistics is the fact that segregation is still the rule in inner city classrooms. Twelve percent of white students attend schools where the majority is non-white, and only 1 percent attend schools that are over 90 percent minority. It is clear that students

are segregated not only by poverty level, but by race and ethnicity as well. (Berliner, 2006) Furthermore, the highest poverty schools have the highest percentage of black and Hispanic students, the highest percentage of children who speak a language other than English at home, the highest percentage of fourth grade classroom teachers that have less than five years experience, and the lowest number of white students per classroom. (NCES, 2006)

The high-poverty concentration in these schools generates or coexists with a host of compounding factors that also tend to undermine students' readiness for learning. High-poverty urban students are more likely to change schools more frequently, less likely to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities and athletics, less likely to come from a two-parent home, and less likely to have a parent who is employed full time. (Lipp, 1996)

Urban students are also likely to undertake their schooling within a large school-bureaucracy setting (though the small-schools movement is increasingly serving them in schools with smaller enrollments). Larger school systems have unwieldy administrative structures that can impede collegiality, affect resource distribution, and create school environments that tend towards impersonality. (Lipp, 1996) The numbers indicate, on average, that urban school systems educate more students than suburban or rural schools. For example, the average urban high school has 1,313 students. In rural areas, the average high school has a student body of 577, while suburban schools enroll and average of 1,197 students.

Thus zip code and school demographics, *despite clear evidence that their challenges can be overcome*, do continue to play an enormous role in affecting a child's experience of education. We must understand the importance of these compositional factors and how they compound and negatively reinforce each other in high-poverty schools before we can design and implement reforms that address achievement gaps.

The achievement records of the high-performing, high-poverty schools demonstrate that zip code need not sync with student success – but right now, that is the norm.

Storm #3: How the System Fails to Support Schools with the Greatest Needs

The first two storms in the triad that makes up this perfect-storm analogy – persistent family poverty, and the environmental impacts of living in high-poverty neighborhoods and attending high-poverty schools – represent a failure of social systems and public policy. The third represents a persistent failure of resource allocation by the nation’s public education system.

tax base.) For example, a wealthy state like Connecticut averages \$9,588 per pupil, while Mississippi spends only \$5,391. Because Title I funds are allocated based upon state formulas, states that spend less per pupil also receive less federal money per student. Massachusetts, for example, receives \$2,048 per poor child from the federal government, while Arkansas receives only \$964 in additional funds to help educate poor children in that state. (Tough, 2006)

Poverty Facts Shaping Education Today

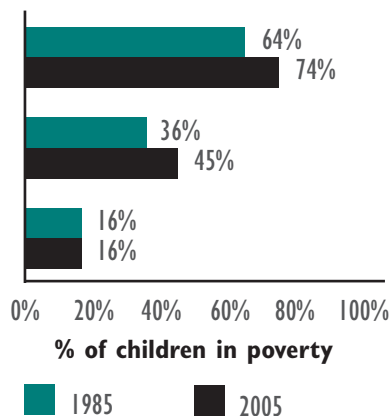
Fact #4: Low achievement generates future poverty, and the cycle is intensifying

The rate of change is mind-boggling: the number of foreign-born people in the US has mushroomed from 10 million in 1974 to over 31 million in 2000. As a percentage of the population, it is rapidly approaching the historic peak of 14.8% in the late 1880s. (Fix & Passel, 2003)

The percentage of all students who were children of immigrants has rocketed from 6% in 1970, to 20% in 2000 and is expected to rise to 30% by 2015. (Hannaway)

In just 25 years, the US will have more minority children than non-minority (MBDA, 1999). Minorities of all ages will comprise nearly 90% of the total population growth from 1995 to 2050. (MBDA, 1999)

Low parent education puts future generations at risk



The distribution of resources between poor and non-poor, and urban, suburban and rural schools, has been a source of controversy at both the local and national level for years. Despite substantial progress in many states, research continues to confirm that high-poverty urban (and rural) students bear the brunt of inadequate financial resources and teaching staff nationally.

Financial Inequality

Predictably, states with the largest populations of poor children generally spend less per pupil. (High poverty rates mean a lower

Teacher Inequality

Teacher inequality arises from a number of factors. Two have particular impact on high-poverty, mostly urban students: teacher experience and quality, and teacher turnover.

- **Teacher quality:** A large percentage of teachers in poorer school systems have neither majored nor minored in the subject they teach. (Whitmore, 1997) Education Trust research conducted in Chicago, Wisconsin, and Ohio also suggests disparity between qualified teachers and the districts in which they teach. In Chicago, twice as many teachers in high-poverty versus low-poverty schools have failed the basic skills test; in Wisconsin there are two times as many novice teachers in low-performing schools as in other schools; and one in eight Ohio teachers in high-minority elementary schools is not highly qualified, compared with one in fifty in low-minority schools. (Education Trust, 2006)

Studies also indicate that teacher quality is subject to racial inequities. In Illinois, for example, only 11 percent of teachers in majority white schools rank in the lowest quartile on teacher quality assessments. Yet where minorities make up the bulk of the student population, 88 percent of teachers rank in the lowest quartile. (Tough, 2006) For further discussion of teacher inequality for poor and minority students, and proposals to bring the best teachers to underserved districts and schools, see The Education Trust’s complete report. (Education Trust, 2006)

- **Teacher turnover:** The teacher turnover issue or, as Ingersoll terms it, the “revolving door,” contributes greatly to teacher staffing difficulties throughout the United States. Annual teacher turnover rates fluctuate from 13 to 16 percent. However, this figure jumps to 22 percent for high-poverty schools. (Ingersoll, 2004) Since teachers comprise over 4 percent of the civilian workforce in the U.S., that means large numbers of people are moving in and out of the teaching profession. During the course of a year, in fact, over one million people transition in and out of the classroom. These findings – higher mobility rates and larger numbers than other professions – suggest that teacher turnover is largely attributable to the structure and organization of the profession itself. Teachers cite numerous non-financial reasons for leaving their schools, including lack of administrative support, inability to impact the system, disciplinary issues, and intrusions on teaching time. (Ingersoll, 2004)

Whatever the cause, teacher turnover disrupts school functioning and curricular sequencing and can impact student performance. While the loss of learning to teacher turnover has not been widely studied, a 2000 Texas Center for Educational Research study concluded the annual financial costs are in the hundreds of millions of dollars. (TCER, 2000)

In high-poverty schools, turnover and teacher quality challenges converge, as schools with mostly poor students retain only 1 percent of the most qualified and highest ranking teachers. (Tough, 2006) Disadvantaged schools likewise experience barriers to the hiring of new teachers, particularly high-quality new teachers. All of this suggests that the schools that most need the best teachers tend to employ the worst, and that teacher turnover and retention rates are particularly serious concerns for high-poverty schools.

Addressing the Perfect Storm

This survey of recent research on poverty’s perfect storm of negative influences on students’ school experience and academic performance provides just a taste of what we are beginning to know. The cumulative effect of these influences is significant. It cannot be solved with higher-expectations rhetoric – *students will reach higher standards if we just expect it of them*. Nor can it be addressed with well-intentioned, but incomplete, reform strategies focused solely on the “readiness to teach” dimension of the Readiness Model we developed for this report: standards-linked curricula, staff development, data analysis. That much we know from the minimal impacts of these school improvement strategies on the most dysfunctional schools, and from the characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty schools. The HPHP schools are not using the impacts of high poverty on their student enrollments as an excuse; they are using these impacts as design parameters to understand how best to serve their students.

We have included this analysis to help explain why existing, incremental efforts to close poverty’s achievement gap have been largely unsuccessful – and to underline the importance of learning from new approaches and systems that are more successfully addressing the needs of high-poverty students. In order to address both the failing-schools gap and the poverty achievement gap, educators will have to create systems, services, incentives, partnerships, and environments that go beyond what is offered in traditional American public school models. Educators will likely have to work closely with a range of partners, including school service providers, neighborhood and community partners, and other social service providers, to be successful. All of this is happening, already, in isolated cases scattered across the country. The challenge for all of us will be to extend that success to every school and to all children, no matter what disadvantages they face.

One in eight Ohio teachers in high-minority elementary schools is not highly qualified, compared with one in fifty in low-minority schools.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Resource Directory for Turnaround Planning and Implementation

Note: The turnaround resources listed and annotated here are a sampling of the many available to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Many that we have included here are not exclusively focused on turnaround, but touch on related topics we believe would be helpful to designers of turnaround strategy. Many more useful resources can be found in the reference section of *The Turnaround Challenge* main report. This resource listing will be continually updated and expanded with live links at www.massinsight.org.

Basics of Accountability and School Reform Efforts

California Center for Effective Schools. *Connections for Success: Effective School Correlates*. Santa Barbara, CA: Author. Retrieved from <http://effectiveschools.education.ucsb.edu/correlates.html>

The Correlates provide a framework for reform based on seven guiding principles. These principles, derived from empirical investigations and case studies of school successes in California, describe the culture and learning climate of schools where students are achieving.

Comprehensive School Quality Center. (2006). *CSRQ Center Report on Education Service Providers*. Washington DC: Author. Retrieved from www.air.org/news/documents/CSRQ_Center_ESP_report_Final_Report.pdf

This report provides a systematic method to evaluate education service providers. Organizations are judged on five main categories: 1) positive effects on student achievement; 2) positive effects on additional outcomes; 3) positive effects on parent, family, and community involvement; 4) a link between research and the models design; 5) services and support to schools to enable successful implementation.

Edmonds, Ronald. (1979, October). Effective Schools for the Urban Poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37(1), 15-24.

This landmark early article reviews research that had been done to date on how urban schools can teach poor children successfully.

Elmore, R. F. (1996). Getting to Scale with Good Educational Practice. *Harvard Educational Review* 66(1), 1-26. Retrieved from www.ku-crl.org/htmlfiles/SE2005/getting_to_scale.doc

Elmore attempts to answer why good ideas about teaching and learning have so little impact on educational practice. He argues that incentives fundamental to the school environment for teachers and administrators are key to both the problem and a potential solution. Many of his later works build on the concepts presented here.

Elmore, R. F. (2003). *Knowing the Right Thing to Do: School Improvement and Performance-based Accountability*. Washington DC: NGA Center for Best Practices. Retrieved from www.nga.org/cda/files/0803KNOWING.PDF

This widely-read paper focuses on “improving schools” that have hit a plateau and need assistance to become truly high performance institutions. Elmore argues the basic problem is not getting people to do the right thing but getting people to know the right thing to do. This information, he argues, can set the foundation of any instructional improvement plan.

Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy, Practice, and Performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

This collection of previously published articles (reviewed individually) provides an in-depth analysis of standards-based reform, accountability, and instructional improvement.

Jerald, C. D. (2006). *Measured Progress: A Report on the High School Reform Movement*.

Washington DC: Education Sector. Retrieved from www.educationsector.org/research/research_show.htm?doc_id=362537

This report examines efforts to improve high schools through the redesign of high schools into small learning communities. It finds that redesigned high schools made less progress than new schools designed from scratch and notes that a larger districtwide set of conditions must be in place to help low-performing high schools improve.

Marzano, R. J. (2000). *A New Era of School Reform: Going Where the Research Takes us*. Aurora, CO: McREL. Retrieved from www.mcrel.org/PDF/SchoolImprovementReform/5002RR_NewEraSchoolReform.pdf

This technical monograph provides a thorough review of the major literature of school reform. It also addresses whether or not the school or teachers can make up for the differences children bring to school as a result of the unequal distribution of wealth and social capital. The report includes an excellent bibliography.

National Education Association. (2002). *Making Low-performing Schools a Priority: An Association Resource Guide*. Washington DC: Author. Retrieved from www.nea.org/priorityschools/

While critics and some reformers point to unions as impediments to reform, this report presents the largest teachers' union's approach to improving low-performing schools. It provides practical advice, plus tools to help operationalize improvement efforts.

Turnaround Definitions and the Impact of No Child Left Behind

Arkin, M. D. & Kowal, J.M. (2005). *School Restructuring Options Under No Child Left Behind: What Works When? Reopening as a Charter School*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from <http://www.ncrel.org/csri/resources/ncrel/knowledgeissues/Reopening.htm>

This part of the *What Works When* series for school restructuring provides a balanced and carefully supported view of the charter school option under NCLB provisions. The report distinguishes between start-up charters and the two types of conversion charters (voluntary and “starting fresh,” when a school is converted by the state or district involuntarily due to low performance).

DiBiase, R. W. (2005). *State Involvement in School Restructuring Under No Child Left Behind*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from www.ecs.org/html/Document.asp?chouseid=6428

This brief report provides a concise summary of NCLB's restructuring requirements. The report reviews the experience of 13 states in implementing restructuring and illustrates the considerable leeway NCLB provides states regarding restructuring plans.

Hatch, T. (2000). What Does it Take to “Go to Scale”? Reflections on the Promise and Perils of Comprehensive School Reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk* 5(4), 339-354. Retrieved from www.leaonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1207/S15327671ESPR0504

This article directly questions whether or not the conditions necessary for scaling up will ever exist if education does not change. It is not a manifesto, but a balanced review of a decade worth of CSR data, highlighting important lessons learned from the experience. The bibliography is full of good citations on CSR studies.

Resources continued

Kowal, J. M. & Arkin, M. D. (2005). *School Restructuring Options under No Child Left Behind: What Works When? Contracting with External Education Management Providers*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from www.ncrel.org/csri/resources/ncrel/knowledgeissues/Contracting.htm

This part of the *What Works When* series for school restructuring provides a strong foundation to understand this often-discussed but minimally-studied educational strategy. The report provides a survey of the research on educational management providers, and notes the successes and challenges these efforts have shown.

Kowal, J. M. & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *School Restructuring Options under No Child Left Behind: What Works When? Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from www.ncrel.org/csri/resources/ncrel/knowledgeissues/Turnarounds.htm

This part of the *What Works When* series for school restructuring discusses options for replacing school leaders and staff and addresses the qualities of an effective turnaround leader.

Steiner, L. M. (2005). *School Restructuring Options under No Child Left Behind: What Works When? State Takeovers of Individual Schools*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from www.ncrel.org/csri/resources/ncrel/knowledgeissues/Takeovers.pdf

This part of the *What Works When* series for school restructuring provides an overview of the options available for state takeover of individual schools. The report reviews past takeovers and suggests success factors and potential challenges. It notes that very few states have taken over individual schools despite having the legislative authority to do so.

Tough, Paul. (2006, November 26). What it Takes to Make a Student. *New York Times Sunday Magazine*.

This article looks at the political history and research on efforts to close the achievement gap between poor/minority students and wealthier/white students. The author concludes that we have the means to close the gap, but that will require new strategies and public will.

Leadership for Turnaround

Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., et al. (2005). *School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. Retrieved from http://seli.stanford.edu/research/documents/SELI_sls_research_review.pdf

This study makes a compelling case that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influencing student learning. The report describes the elements of good leadership; presents research on characteristics of programs that will develop these leadership skills; and suggests numerous pathways to leadership development.

Fullan, M. (2005). Turnaround Leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69(2), 174-181. Retrieved from www.kdp.org/archives/files/edforum/FV69N2P174-181.pdf

Fullan cautions that turnaround leadership can easily sacrifice long-term gain for short-term superficial gain. Fullan believes capacity building must be at the key to any long-term effort of turnaround or improvement.

Orr, M. T., Byrne-Jimenez, M., McFarlane, P., & Brown, B. (2005, January). Leading out from Low-performing Schools: The Urban Principal Experience. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4(1), 23-54. Retrieved from www.ingentaconnect.com/.../lpos/2005/00000004/

This report examines the role urban principals play in turning around low-performing schools. It addresses key issues of urban principalship, including the lack of clear evidence on how to effectively turn around low-performing schools;

the size and inexperience of urban districts' leadership teams; and differences between principals' and districts' expectations for principal leadership and school change.

accountability influences high school decision making; 3) Efforts designed to improve instruction; 4) District responses to accountability.

Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., et al. (2003). *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells us about the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*. Aurora, CO: McREL. Retrieved from www.mcrel.org/PDF/LeadershipOrganizationDevelopment/5031RR_BalancedLeadership.pdf

This meta-analysis of research over the past 30 years addressing the effects of leadership on student achievement concludes there is a relationship between leadership and student achievement with an average effect size of .25. The study also finds 21 specific leadership responsibilities significantly correlated with student achievement.

Turnaround Policymaking: What's Required to Produce Fundamental Change

(2004). *Partners in Progress: A Framework for Raising Student Achievement in Under-performing School Districts*. Boston, MA: Governor's Task Force on State Intervention in Under-performing Districts. Retrieved from www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/news04/Partners_in_Progress_04_4.pdf

This report provides compelling arguments for a district role in improving low-performing schools. The report defines characteristics of effective school districts, presents five major barriers to success, and makes recommendations for statewide initiatives and targeted initiatives for under performing districts.

(2005). *Holding High Hopes: How High Schools Respond to State Accountability Policies*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). Retrieved from www.cpre.org/Publications/rr56.pdf

Focused on high schools, this report outlines 1) high school responses to external accountability; 2) How

(2006, September 13). Leading for Learning. Supplement to *Education Week*, S1-S19. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/html/offsite.asp?document=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eedweek%2Eorg%2Fmedia%2F03wallace%2Epdf>

This series of articles and data reports provide a strong overview of state efforts to help districts and schools improve learning. The articles describe different types and levels of support provided, and highlight effective practices in Kentucky, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania.

Bowels, S. A., Churchill, A. M., et al. (2002). *School and District Intervention: A Decision-making Framework for Policymakers*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Center for Education Policy. Retrieved from www.umass.edu/education/cep/research/intervention.htm

This report provides a step-by-step framework for policymakers to understand district and school interventions. The report includes an easy-to-follow set of questions for policy makers covering: 1) performance criteria; 2) strategic criteria; 3) diagnostic intervention; 4) corrective intervention; 5) target; and 6) exit criteria.

Colby, S., K. Smith, et al. (2005). *Expanding the Supply of High-quality Public Schools*. Boston, MA: The Bridgespan Group. Retrieved from http://www.bridgespangroup.org/kno_articles.html

This report cites two major levers associated with creating and replicating successful schools: 1) The degree of managerial responsibility, support and control the organization chooses to exercise; and 2) the specificity of school design. The report provides an effective graphic placing the various school developers on a matrix of design specificity and management responsibility, support, and control.

Resources continued

Kirst, M. W. (2002). *Mayoral Influence, New Regimes, and Public School Governance*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). Retrieved from www.cpre.org/Publications/rr49.pdf

This report provides a solid background to understanding the growing trend of mayoral control over the public school system. This report presents a range from low involvement to high involvement and provides analysis of cities across the country that fall along this range.

Mazzeo, C. & Berman, I. (2003). *Reaching New Heights: Turning Around Low-performing Schools*. Washington DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Retrieved from www.nga.org/cda/files/0803REACHING.PDF

This guide for governors lists five guiding principles: 1) Not all low-performing schools are the same; 2) Capacity-building must be part of the solution; 3) Districts are essential collaborators; 4) Be prepared for the long haul; and, 5) Assistance to low-performing schools should be part of a larger strategy.

McRobbie, J. (1998). *Can State Intervention Spur Academic Turnaround?* San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/470

This paper examines issues states confront when devising programs of academic intervention for low-performing schools. It emphasizes the need for clarity, fairness, coherence, understandability, capacity building, and legal defensibility.

Mintrop, H. & Trujillo, T. (2005). *Corrective Action in Low-performing Schools: Lessons for NCLB Implementation from State and District Strategies in First-generation Accountability Systems*. Los Angeles, CA: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing. Retrieved from www.cse.ucla.edu/reports/R657.pdf

This report carefully reviews the results of first-generation accountability systems and draws important lessons and conclusions from these states' experiences. Viable

solutions are offered along with the clear message that turning around low performing schools requires large-scale commitment and investment by state Departments of Education.

Scaling Up Turnaround: An Analysis of Current State and District Efforts

Note: see Reference Section in the Main Report for many more resources in this category. The following is just a sampling:

Views into 38 school districts

Center on Education Policy. (2006). *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington DC: Author. Retrieved from the Center on Education Policy: <http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.showFeature&FeatureID=29&C:\CFusion\MX7\verity\Data\dummy.txt>

This comprehensive national study of the impact of NCLB includes extensive research and analysis, a survey of education officials in 50 states, a nationally representative survey of 299 school districts, and in-depth case studies in 38 geographically diverse districts and 42 individual schools. Read the full report, as well as 38 separate case studies.

Baltimore

Rhim, L. M. (2004). *Restructuring Schools in Baltimore: An Analysis of State and District Efforts*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from www.ecs.org/html/Document.asp?chouseid=5326

This report examines restructuring initiatives by the Maryland Department of Education and the Baltimore City Public Schools. It provides a thorough description and analysis of how education management contracting was used as a turnaround strategy.

California

O'Day, J. & Bitter, C. (2003). *Evaluation Study of the Immediate Intervention/Under-performing Schools Program and High Achieving/Improving Schools Program of the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999*. Palo Alto, CA: AIR. Retrieved from www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

This evaluation of California's accountability system (Public Schools Accountability Act or PSSA) paints a fairly stark picture. Overall, PSAA focused attention on improving student achievement in low performing schools. However, both the lower-achieving and the higher-achieving schools received negligible benefits from these programs.

Philadelphia

Rhim, L. M. (2005). *School Restructuring in Philadelphia: Management Lessons from 2002 to 2005*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from www.ecs.org/clearing-house/64/01/6401.pdf

This concise policy brief examines the Philadelphia experiment in a mixed provider model of restructuring. Philadelphia can serve as a harbinger of NCLB restructuring, and this report summarizes the efforts and provides preliminary analysis and conclusions.

Useem, E. (2005). *Learning from Philadelphia's School Reform: What do the Research Findings Show so Far?* Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action. Retrieved from www.researchforaction.org/PSR/PublishedWorks.htm

This report is the definitive study of the beginnings of Philadelphia's experiment with a diverse provider model. It is too early to tell whether or not the experiment will be successful, but this report offers important insights for those who may wish to learn from the Philadelphia experience.

Kansas City

Connell, J. (2003). Getting Off the Dime Toward Meaningful Reform in Secondary Schools: Lessons on How Model Developers and School Districts can Facilitate the Success of School Reform. *Benchmarks* 4(3), 1-11. Retrieved from www.irre.org/publications/pdfs/benchmarks_summer_2003.pdf

This report presents lessons learned from the First Things First (FTF) model, focusing largely on the Kansas City, Kansas, school reform effort. Although Kansas City is not necessarily typical of a large, urban, academically-challenged district, the results for secondary schools are fairly impressive.

Massachusetts

Mass Insight, 2001-05, Building Blocks Initiative. Available: <http://www.buildingblocks.org>

The Building Blocks Initiative Educators' Blueprints are a searchable library of effective organizational strategies to improve schools. These strategies have been pursued with success by schools and districts in Massachusetts that are producing student achievement levels exceeding those of schools and districts serving similar student populations.

Meeting the Turnaround Challenge

Implementation Strategies and Tools for States, Districts, Schools, and Partners

The Turnaround Challenge, including this supplement to that report, is part of a larger initiative aimed at helping states, districts, schools, and partners to successfully address the issue of chronically under-performing schools – and to use failing-school turnaround as the entry point for fundamental change more broadly in public education.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded the Mass Insight Education & Research Institute a grant late in 2005 to produce a framework for states and districts seeking a flexible, systemic approach for swift, significant improvement in schools (particularly high schools) that have clearly failed their mission, producing track records of under-achievement that are indefensibly poor. *The Turnaround Challenge* and corollary resources that can be found at www.massinsight.org are the result of that grant.

A follow-up grant from the Gates Foundation is supporting a Mass Insight-led effort to inform national and state leader discussions and actions around the issue of school turnaround, and to carry out a research and development process, in conjunction with national collaborators, that will help states, districts, and others implement the report's turnaround framework at three levels:

- **State and District Strategies for Turnaround at Scale:** Developing work-plans and templates for the strategic approaches, organizational structures, and policy language states and districts need to undertake effective turnaround in the bottom five percent of under-performing schools – and to invite schools not yet in NCLB's Restructuring category to perform “pre-emptive turnaround,” using similar strategies.
- **School Cluster/Partner Network:** Defining a new model for integrated school network partnerships – school clusters that amount to “mini-districts” supported by lead external partners and special district turnaround offices – and building a new generation of lead turnaround partners as key implementers.

- **School:** Producing detailed strategy choices, work-plans, and practical tools for school leaders and their partners in implementing turnaround.

This research-and-development effort will also lay initial groundwork for three potential national initiatives to build out these strategies:

- **Pilot Cohort of Turnaround States and Districts:** Working closely with three to five states and as many large urban districts (along with other partners) to implement a full range of turnaround strategies, adapted for each site, emerging from this work.
- **Turnaround Partner Capacity-Building:** Creating intermediary organizations or other national resources that would provide investment and technical assistance to build a viable marketplace of lead turnaround partners. (Mass Insight does not intend to serve a lead turnaround role, but to act as a catalyst for the development of this resource base.)
- **National Center:** Develop a national center to conduct related research, advocate for comprehensive turnaround, produce additional tools and templates, and continue the work of defining and refining school turnaround as discipline.

All of the elements of this follow-up initiative will involve national collaborators, including individuals and organizations with particular expertise in urban education (including practitioners and external providers), turnaround (in education and other sectors as well), state policy, mission-driven investment, communications and advocacy, and research. The initiative builds on and directly supports related work that Mass Insight has performed for the Washington and Illinois state boards of education, the latter in partnership with Holland & Knight and with contractual support from the Gates Foundation. For more information, please visit us on the web at www.massinsight.org.

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute Funders

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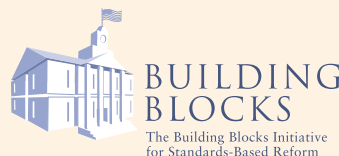
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- Massachusetts Department of Education
- Title IIA and IIB Math and Science Partnership
- Comprehensive School Reform
- Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

Districts/Schools: Membership fees
and earned revenue for field services



Mass Insight Education & Research Institute, founded in 1997, is an independent non-profit that organizes public schools, higher education, business, and state government to significantly improve student achievement, with a focus on closing achievement gaps.

Mass Insight's education reform strategies are defined by two convictions: that change at scale depends on the practical integration of research, policy, and practice; and that only dramatic and comprehensive change in high-poverty schools will produce significant achievement gains. The strategies that Boston-based Mass Insight implemented to help make Massachusetts a reform model now inform the organization's national work on two high-impact goals:

- using Advanced Placement® as a lever to attain excellence in math and science achievement and to transform school culture, and
- the successful turnaround of consistently under-performing public schools.

We are:

Synthesizers and providers of research. Mass Insight is a national resource for practical information on how to effectively implement standards-based education. *The Turnaround Challenge* represents a new form of educational policy research: highly graphical, presented in varying user-formats (print, presentation, web), and expressly designed to spur action on both the policy and practice fronts. Our *Building Blocks Initiative* (www.buildingblocks.org) has been cited as a model for effective-practice research by the U.S. Department of Education. The landmark *Keep the Promise Initiative* studied urban, at-risk high school students in the first three classes subject to Massachusetts' MCAS graduation requirement and district strategies for serving them.

Policy facilitators. We are a leading statewide convener and catalyst for thoughtful, informed state education policymaking. Mass Insight's *Great Schools Campaign* and its predecessor, the *Campaign for Higher Standards*, have played a highly visible role in shaping the priorities of Massachusetts' second decade of school reform. Mass Insight consults on education policy formation outside Massachusetts as well - most recently helping to design school turnaround programs in Illinois and Washington State.

Leaders in standards-based services to schools. We provide practical, research-based technical services, staff and leadership development programs, and consulting services to schools and school districts - particularly to members of the *Great Schools Coalition*, a 10-year-old partnership of nearly 30 change-oriented Massachusetts districts. Our field services have focused on math and science, and over the next five-to-ten years will revolve principally around using increased access to AP® courses and improved performance on AP tests to catalyze dramatic cultural and instructional change in schools across grades 6-12. The effort will be funded in part through the National Math & Science Initiative, which recently awarded Mass Insight \$13 million as the Massachusetts lead on a competitive national RFP.

See www.massinsight.org for more details.



School Turnaround: a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in student achievement within two academic years.

