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SCHOOL TURNAROUND LEADERS: *Selection Toolkit*

Part of the School Turnaround Collection from Public Impact

COLLABORATION AMONG STAFF. THAT IS
THE STUFF OF WHICH RAPID, BAD-TO-GREAT
TURNAROUNDS ACROSS SECTORS ARE MADE.
UNDERSTAND THE UNDERLYING
CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS LIKELY TO
SUCCEED IN THIS UNIQUE CONTEXT, BASED
ON THE BEST AVAILABLE RESEARCH TO
DATE. AS MORE SCHOOLS ATTEMPT
TURNAROUNDS, INCREASINGLY ACCURATE

Acknowledgements

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About the Authors

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Companion Guides Available Spring 2008:*

- School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success*
- School Turnaround Teachers: Selection Toolkit*
- School Turnaround Teachers: Competencies for Success*

*Check for these and new, related guides and tools at PublicImpact.com.

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Printing Instructions

This toolkit includes six separate sections, listed above, each of which is designed to be used at different stages of the selection process. For your convenience, each section has its own cover and Table of Contents so that you may print, copy and use the sections separately as needed. You also will need to make additional copies of some tools, and this is indicated where we think you will find copies most helpful (in the interview and candidate rating steps). Every member of the interview team should have one complete copy of this toolkit, as well.

School Turnaround Leaders

Selection Preparation Guide

By Public Impact
For The Chicago Public Education Fund and
District of Columbia Public Schools
June 2008

Selection Preparation Guide

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Introduction

The school turnaround leader competencies – or consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, acting and speaking – included here are the best currently known, measurable distinguishers between very high performers and more typical or lower-performing leaders in a turnaround setting. The competency list we provide does not include all capabilities needed to perform. Instead the list here focuses on competencies that would distinguish between very successful leaders and the rest in a school turnaround situation.

The competencies listed here were derived by “mapping” the cross-sector research on turnaround leader actions (see Appendix B) to high-quality competency studies of successful entrepreneurs and leaders in large organizations.¹ The competencies chosen fit the activities that turnaround leaders share with leaders in these other contexts. Validation, refinement and further customization of these competencies will be possible as the number of successful school turnarounds grows and comparisons among more and less successful school turnaround leaders are possible. These competencies are arranged into four clusters of related capabilities.

For more information about school turnaround leader and teacher competencies, please see *Leaders for School Turnarounds: Competencies for Success*, *Teachers for School Turnarounds: Competencies for Success* and *Teachers for School Turnarounds: Selection Toolkit* (available at PublicImpact.com). These documents provide background information about effective bad-to-great turnarounds, turnaround teacher and leader competency definitions with school examples, and a bibliography of helpful sources.

¹ Competencies selected from *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance*, Spencer and Spencer (1993). Leader actions from *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organization Improvement*, Public Impact for the Center on Innovation and Improvement (2007) and *Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff*, Public Impact for the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006).

Background on the BEI Interview Process

Competencies are key predictors of how someone will perform at work. Two leaders of schools with similar students may have the same training and level of experience, but lead schools with very different student learning outcomes. Why is this? Research suggests that competencies make the difference. Acting with initiative and persistence is an example of a competency, as are planning ahead, team leadership and self-confidence. People who have previously exhibited high levels of the competencies that determine leadership success in a turnaround are more likely to succeed as future turnaround leaders.

Unfortunately, research indicates that traditional interview techniques rarely uncover competencies that predict future performance differences. Too often, job candidates speak in generalities about what they think they should or would do, not about what they actually do at work. Fortunately, it is possible to learn what people actually do through a specialized interview technique – the Behavior Event Interview (BEI). In a BEI, candidates are asked to describe their detailed actions and thinking in past work events. And knowing what candidates have done to achieve success at work is a strong predictor of how they will seek success at work in the future.

As part of your hiring process you may want to screen leader candidates for knowledge or skills that are not addressed directly in the competencies (e.g., the ability to interpret school data, mastery of specific instructional practices that your district uses). In this case, the BEI can be used as **one part** of a longer interview. In addition to the interview, you may choose additional candidate screening techniques. Assessing writing samples, observing principals in their schools, and asking candidates to perform job-related tasks such as presenting challenging information to a group of parents, are all common techniques used to screen candidates.

Overview of the BEI Interview Process²

In a BEI, the interviewer's goal is to understand in detail how candidates perform various aspects of their work. To do this, the interviewer(s) asks candidates to recall past events when they have felt successful or have dealt with specific situations at work. (e.g., a time when he or she influenced another person, participated in a group activity). The expectation is that the candidate will spend 15 minutes or more describing the incident.

- The interviewer asks first for a brief (e.g., 1 minute) summary of what led up to each situation and the critical milestones or “headlines” in the story that the person is about to tell, such as key conversations or meetings, key actions, turning points and how the situation ended.
- Then the interviewer asks the candidate to walk through the story step by step, recounting exactly what the candidates did, said, thought and felt at the time and how others who were involved responded.
- The interviewer *must* interrupt the candidate to probe for detail needed to understand exactly what the person was doing and thinking at the time.
- Only responses about what the person was doing, saying, feeling or thinking at that past time are valid. Current thoughts about the event and hypotheses about what the person would do next time are not as accurate at predicting what a person would do on the job.

² Source: see *Competence at Work*, Spencer and Spencer (1993) for a detailed description of BEI techniques.

- Following these rules of thumb and using the rest of the instructions provided here will help you make the most valid comparison among candidates using BEIs.

Step 1: Before the interview

- All members of the Interview Team should read this document, the [Selection Preparation Guide](#). This guide provides detailed, concise information about how to conduct a BEI interview including how to introduce the BEI to the interviewee, how to select and ask initial questions, and what types of follow-up questions are effective.
- Determine which interview questions you want to ask from the [Choosing Questions to Ask in Interviews](#) section of this guide.
- Decide who will ask questions and follow-up probes and who will take detailed notes during the interview. Ideally, two people should interview each candidate.

Step 2: During the interview

- Use the [Script for Introducing BEI Questions](#) provided in this guide (p. 9).
- Establish an informal, friendly tone and explain the interview objectives and format (different from most interviews, asks candidates to replay key events in great detail so you can understand exactly how they do their work).
- Explain that interviewer may interrupt to probe for more detail (e.g., Sorry in advance for interrupting).
- Reward candidates when they provide appropriate level of detail (e.g., Thanks, that is just the level of detail I am looking for ...).
- Interrupt candidates to probe for *step by step details* of what they did, said, and thought at the time (e.g., Let's go back. What did you say to him?).
- Examples of effective probes:
 - What did you say?
 - What did you do next?
 - Take me through that incident, step by step.
 - What was going through your mind at that point?
- Don't waste candidate time by allowing answers that you can't score – interrupting and probing ensures that each candidate has the best possible chance to score highly.
- Avoid asking “why” a person did or said something in the past, since this leads most people to speculate rather than recount past thoughts. Instead, ask “What were you thinking at the time?” to find out what was in the person's mind at the time.
- Take notes on what the candidate says – *scorable* interview responses must be:
 - in first person,
 - descriptive of real rather than hypothetical events or thoughts,
 - set in the past, and
 - precise (not: I usually..., Typically I...etc.).

Step 3: After the interview

- Read your interview notes and highlight scorable interview responses.
- Use the [Candidate Rating Tools](#) to determine if a particular candidate has the turnaround competencies at a level high enough to be successful in this demanding environment. On these tools, note the highest level – Red Flag, Neutral, Threshold or Superior – of each target competency that the candidate demonstrated.

- Make a note of any other “red flag” responses, or concerns you have from the interview about other competencies.
- Use the [Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools](#) to make hiring decisions.
- **Induction:** Immediately following the interview process is an ideal time to begin the larger induction process because the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses are fresh in everyone’s mind. Consider spending a few minutes as an interview team taking initial notes on the types of support and guidance each candidate will need to be successful in his or her new position. Are there particular supports, guidance and/or resources that would help the candidate prepare to hit the ground running? Take note of these immediately.

Script for Introducing BEI Questions

Because the BEI is an unusual interview technique, it is important to give candidates good initial instructions about how you would like them to respond during this part of the interview. The following is a script that outlines what the interviewer might say at the beginning of the interview. You will want to adapt this to your own context and use words that you feel comfortable with, but this gives you a starting point.

Lead interviewer says, *“We want to understand in detail how you do your work, especially when you have felt successful or challenged. So, we are going to ask a different type of interview question from the usual. We are going to ask you to describe past events in great detail – almost as if you have a video camera on your shoulder and are showing us exactly what happened. At different points, I or my teammates here will interrupt you to ask for more detail. Sorry in advance for that!”*

[Ask the question.]

Take a minute to think of a story you have to tell that matches the question. We want you to give us a “headline version” first. Take a minute to think, and then give me the headlines of key events, or most critical parts of your story...the beginning, middle and end. Next we’ll go back and get you to walk us through it step by step.

[Take notes on the highlights of their story, perhaps drawing little boxes or a list of the key milestones at the top of your notes page (see the [Interview Notes](#) in [Day-of-Interview Tools](#).)

[Once the candidate has given you the headlines:] *OK, great. Now, take me back to the beginning. Walk me through step by step what you did, said and thought at the time. And how others responded.”*

Choosing Questions to Ask in Interviews

Instructions: Prior to the interview, interview team members will need to determine which competencies they particularly want to address and how long they plan to spend on the BEI portion of the interview. Some committees may decide to focus entirely on BEI questions, other teams may have additional questions they would like to ask.

Steps:

1. Decide when you are going to use BEI questions in your interview process. Many interview teams find it more effective to ask other questions before launching into the BEI portion of the interview.
2. Decide which BEI questions your interviewer(s) will ask.
3. Mark or record your selected questions in advance of interviews on the [Interview Notes](#) in [Day-of-Interview Tools](#).

Screening for Critical Competencies

As part of your selection process, you should consider screening all candidates for the five critical competencies. The critical competencies were identified because they are:

- ◆ Particularly important to success in the turnaround leader role,
- ◆ Harder than other competencies to develop quickly (so that selecting for them is important), and
- ◆ Predictive of other competencies, because a leader can only reach the higher levels of these competencies by using other important competencies (e.g., Level 4 of the Achievement competency, *Prioritizes Goals and Tasks Based on Cost-Benefit*, requires the competency Analytical Thinking and Planning)

Two of the critical competencies are designated as primary:

- Achievement*
- Impact and Influence*

Without high levels of these two competencies from the start, strength in other competencies likely will not be sufficient for success as a turnaround leader. Assessing for these two is the most important part of the selection process. Hiring processes with limited time or resources will benefit from assessing candidates for these two competencies alone.

The secondary critical competencies include:

- Monitoring and Directiveness*
- Team Leadership*
- Self-Confidence*

These also very directly support the proven actions of highly successful turnaround leaders in cross-sector case studies and are difficult to develop quickly. They may show up during assessment of the primary critical competencies, but direct assessment of these may distinguish among some candidates.

The remaining competencies also are important. Each one has shown up in numerous, high-quality, cross-sector leader competency studies and support turnaround leader actions. This package includes Behavioral Event Interview questions for each of these.

We suggest one of three routes for choosing interview questions:

- **Quickest Version:** Ask Questions #1 and 2 only from our [Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies](#) (see below), but also rate interviewee responses against the other competencies on this list *or* against your own list of high-priority competencies from the [Complete Question Menu](#) (see below). *Estimated Time: 30 - 45 minutes*
- **Quick Version:** Ask Questions #1 and 2 plus one more. Select the additional question from the [Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies](#) *or* from the [Complete Question Menu](#). *Estimated Time: 1 hour for three questions.*
- **Long Version:** Ask all five [Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies](#) or select your own 5 questions from the [Complete Question Menu](#). We suggest always asking Question #1 (Achievement), as it often elicits information both about people's standards for "success" and other competencies they use when they are most successful. *Estimated Time: 1 and ½ - 2 hours for five questions.*

Other Considerations:

- **Time required:** Response time per question can vary from 15 minutes to an hour. Highly competent people often have longer, richer stories to tell. Most people can provide responses with enough detail in 15 – 30 minutes.
- **Altering questions:** If you alter questions, avoid changing them to "leading" questions that indicate the desired responses. Leading questions (e.g., So you decided at that point to meet with parents because you thought this would ease the tension?) reduce distinctions in responses of more and less competent people, limiting their usefulness for selection decisions.

Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies

These five questions were selected to cover competencies that:

- are likely to be most predictive of success for turnaround leaders,
- require use of other critical leader competencies (and so will help you assess multiple competencies), and/or
- distinguish candidates who would perform well in a *turnaround* effort versus other school situations.

#	Competency	Question
1	Achievement (ACH)	Think about a time when you <i>felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished</i> at work, and tell me the story.
2	Impact and Influence (I&I)	Think about a time when you <i>influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying</i> to you, and tell me the story.
3	Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	Think about a time when you <i>set a standard for someone else's work and held that person accountable</i> for adhering to that standard. Tell me the story.
4	Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you <i>led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying</i> to you, and tell me the story.
5	Self-Confidence (SCF)	Tell me about a time when <i>another person or people stood in your way to get something done and you addressed the situation</i> to your satisfaction. Tell me the story.

Complete Question Menu

The complete question menu includes questions for the critical competencies as well as the other competencies that have shown up in numerous cross-sector leader competency studies.

#	Competency	Question
<i>Driving for Results Cluster</i>		
1	Achievement (ACH)	Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work, and tell me the story.
2	Initiative and Persistence (I&P)	Think about a time when you accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles. Tell me the story.
3	Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	Think about a time when you set a standard for someone else's work and held that person accountable for adhering to that standard, and tell me the story.
4	Planning Ahead (PA)	Think about a time when you had to think ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work. Tell me the story. (Make sure to clarify time frame: when did the thinking ahead occur in relation to the anticipated events in the future? How far in advance?)
<i>Influencing for Results Cluster</i>		
5	Impact and Influence (I&I)	Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.
6	Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.
7	Developing Others (DO)	Think about a time when you helped someone else become more successful in carrying out their job or in their career. Tell me the story.
<i>Problem Solving Cluster</i>		
8	Analytical Thinking (AT)	Think about a time when you had to solve a problem or figure something out that involved a lot of information, data or steps. Tell me the story.
9	Conceptual Thinking (CT)	Think about a time when you were confronted with a lot of information and had to figure out what was most important. Tell me the story.
<i>Showing Confidence to Lead</i>		
10	Self-Confidence (SCF)	Tell me about a time when another person or people stood in your way to get something done and you addressed the situation to your satisfaction. Tell me the story.

School Turnaround Leaders

Day-of-Interview Tools

By Public Impact
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June 2008

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Instructions for Interview Team

The following tools are designed for use during the leader candidate interview. These tools are designed to be used in tandem with the [Selection Preparation Guide](#), which provides an overview of the selection process. They include questions as well as structured note-taking pages to use during the interview.

Prior to the interview

- All members of the Interview Team should read the [Selection Preparation Guide](#). This guide provides detailed, concise information about how to conduct a BEI interview including how to introduce the BEI to the interviewee, how to select and ask initial questions, and what types of follow-up questions are effective.
- In addition, all members of the interview team should familiarize themselves with the leader competencies that are needed for success in a turnaround school.³ Detailed descriptions of these competencies as well as the rating levels within each competency can be found in *Leaders for School Turnarounds: Competencies for Success* (available at PublicImpact.com).
- Decide which questions you are going to ask and check or circle those on the following pages. For more help, see the [Choosing Questions to Ask in Interviews](#) section of the [Selection Preparation Guide](#).
- Each member of the interview team should have a copy of [Day-of-Interview Tools](#).
- Make additional copies of the [Interview Notes](#) pages (see attached). At the top of the page, indicate the questions for which you are taking notes. **Every member of the interview team should have one copy of the two-page Interview Notes pages for each question that the team plans to ask.**
- Decide who will ask questions and follow-up probes and who will take detailed notes during the interview. Ideally, at least two people should interview each candidate.

³ Competencies selected from *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance*, Spencer and Spencer (1993).

During the interview

- Each team member should have the [Interview Notes](#) pages in front of them. There should be one copy for **each** BEI question you plan to ask.
- The space for “Notes” includes a section to write down a brief overview of the incident the candidate chooses to describe as well as additional space to write detailed notes about what the candidate says. These notes will later be used to determine if the candidate has the competencies at high enough levels to be successful, so detailed notes are important.
- For the detailed notes, write down anything you hear about:
 - what the candidate actually said, did or was thinking or feeling at the time of the incident, and
 - responses they got from other people at the time.
- Tips for the *questioner* - Examples of effective probes:
 - What did you say?
 - What did you do next?
 - Take me through that incident, step by step.
 - What was going through your mind at that point?
- Tips for the *note taker* -Scorable interview responses must be:
 - First person (“I did this,” *not* “We did this”)
 - Real rather than hypothetical actions and feelings (“I said...” not “I would say...”)
 - Volunteered by candidate, not suggested by interviewer (“What was your role?” . . . “I led the meeting,” *not* “Did you lead the meeting?” . . . “Yes”)
 - About the past rather than present feelings or behavior (I felt hopeful...)
 - Precise, not general (not: I usually..., Typically I ..., etc.)

After the interview

- Use the [Candidate Rating Tools](#) to determine whether candidates have the competencies at high enough levels to be successful.
- Use the [Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools](#) to compare and rank candidates for selection.

Script for Introducing BEI Questions

Because the BEI is an unusual interview technique, it is important to give candidates good initial instructions about how you would like them to respond during this part of the interview. The following is a script that outlines what the interviewer might say at the beginning of the interview. You will want to adapt this to your own context and use words that you feel comfortable with, but this gives you a starting point.

Lead interviewer says, *“We want to understand in detail how you do your work, especially when you have felt successful or challenged. So, we are going to ask a different type of interview question from the usual. We are going to ask you to describe past events in great detail – almost as if you have a video camera on your shoulder and are showing us exactly what happened. At different points, I or my teammates here will interrupt you to ask for more detail. Sorry in advance for that!”*

[Ask the question.]

Take a minute to think of a story you have to tell that matches the question. We want you to give us a “headline version” first. Take a minute to think, and then give me the headlines of key events, or most critical parts of your story...the beginning, middle and end. Next we’ll go back and get you to walk us through it step by step.

[Take notes on the highlights of their story, perhaps drawing little boxes or a list of the key milestones at the top of your notes page (see the [Interview Notes](#) in [Day-of-Interview Tools](#)).]

[Once the candidate has given you the headlines:] *OK, great. Now, take me back to the beginning. Walk me through step by step what you did, said and thought at the time. And how others responded.”*

Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies

These five questions were selected to cover competencies that:

- are likely to be most predictive of success for turnaround leaders,
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4	Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you <i>led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying</i> to you, and tell me the story.
5	Self-Confidence (SCF)	Tell me about a time when <i>another person or people stood in your way to get something done and you addressed the situation</i> to your satisfaction. Tell me the story.

Complete Question Menu

The complete question menu includes questions for the critical competencies as well as the other competencies that have shown up in numerous cross-sector leader competency studies.

#	Competency	Question
<i>Driving for Results Cluster</i>		
1	Achievement (ACH)	Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work, and tell me the story.
2	Initiative and Persistence (I&P)	Think about a time when you accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles. Tell me the story.
3	Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	Think about a time when you set a standard for someone else's work and held that person accountable for adhering to that standard, and tell me the story.
4	Planning Ahead (PLA)	Think about a time when you had to think ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work. Tell me the story. (Make sure to clarify time frame: when did the thinking ahead occur in relation to the anticipated events in the future? How far in advance?)
<i>Influencing for Results Cluster</i>		
5	Impact and Influence (I&I)	Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.
6	Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.
7	Developing Others (DO)	Think about a time when you helped someone else become more successful in carrying out their job or in their career. Tell me the story.
<i>Problem Solving Cluster</i>		
8	Analytical Thinking (AT)	Think about a time when you had to solve a problem or figure something out that involved a lot of information, data or steps. Tell me the story.
9	Conceptual Thinking (CT)	Think about a time when you were confronted with a lot of information and had to figure out what was most important. Tell me the story.
<i>Showing Confidence to Lead</i>		
10	Self-Confidence (SCF)	Tell me about a time when another person or people stood in your way to get something done and you addressed the situation to your satisfaction. Tell me the story.

Candidate Name	Interviewer	Date
BEI Interview Questions		
Critical Competency Questions:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Achievement: Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work, and tell me the story.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Impact and Influence: Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and Directiveness: Think about a time when you set a standard for someone else's work and held that person accountable for adhering to that standard, and tell me the story.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leadership: Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Confidence: Tell me about a time when you helped another person, someone whom others were not sure could improve, to achieve or succeed at a higher level.		
Additional Competency Questions:		
<input type="checkbox"/> _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> _____		
Notes		
Overview of Incident (3-6 Key Milestones, start-middle-end):		
Details about Incident (Continue on next page):		

Interview Notes

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Candidate Name	Interviewer	Date
Notes Details about Incident:		

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Candidate Rating Tools

By Public Impact
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June 2008

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Instructions for Interview Team

The scoring sheet is designed to help you select school leaders who will be successful in a turnaround school – a school that needs to move from very low performance to high performance quickly. By analyzing the candidate’s comments during the interview and comparing these comments to what is known about people who have high levels of particular competencies,⁴ you will be able to determine if a particular candidate has a competency at a level high enough to be successful in this demanding environment.

In order to complete this scoring sheet, you will need:

- [Interview Notes](#) pages (completed by your team during interviews)
- [Leader Competency Rating Levels](#) (see Appendix A)

Quick List of Action Steps:

- Step 1: List competencies on scoring sheet
- Step 2: Highlight scorable data
- Step 3: Determine competencies
- Step 4: Assign competency zones and levels
- Step 5: Take notes

In Detail . . .

Step 1: List competencies on scoring sheet

List the competencies that you are assessing in the “Competency List” column on the scoring sheet. Start with the competencies for which you have asked specific interview questions. You may decide to list all of the most critical competencies (see [Selection Preparation Guide](#) for more information about critical competencies), or you may decide to assess candidates for additional or different turnaround leader competencies that you have chosen.

Step 2: Highlight scorable data

Read through interview notes and underline scorable data for competencies you have listed on the scoring sheet. Use the [Leader Competency Rating Levels](#) (Appendix A) to help you think about what kinds of data are relevant to the competencies you wish to score.

⁴ Competencies selected from *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance*, Spencer and Spencer (1993).

Scorable data is:

- First person (“I did this” not “We did this”). Real rather than hypothetical actions and feelings (“I said...” not “I would say...”)
- Volunteered by candidate, not suggested by interviewer
- About the past rather than present feelings or behavior (I felt hopeful...)
- Precise, not general (not: I usually..., Typically I ..., etc.)

Example:

Interviewer: What thoughts went through your mind at that point?

Candidate: I suddenly realized that I needed to devote an entire staff meeting to sharing data. I had been going about things in the wrong way. I had been talking to teachers individually, but I decided then that it would be much more persuasive if I could get everyone together and look at overall school trends as well as individual classroom scores.

Step 3: Determine competencies

Compare your underlined statements with the competency definitions in the [Leader Competency Rating Levels](#) (see Appendix A). Note in the margins of the interview notes the competencies that are demonstrated in the underlined statements.

Example: I decided then that it would be much more persuasive if I could get everyone together and look at overall school trends as well as individual classroom scores. (Impact and Influence)

Step 4: Assign competency zones and levels

- Compare the underlined statements with the competency levels in the [Leader Competency Rating Levels](#) (see Appendix A).
- Determine whether the candidate’s comments suggest they have demonstrated the Red Flag, Neutral, Threshold or Superior zone for each of the competencies you are assessing. Circle the appropriate rating in the “Zone” column.
- You also may assign a numerical level to each of the competencies you are assessing. Enter the number of the highest level you see in the interview notes in the “Level” column. Members of the interview committee may want to collaborate during this process and discuss zone and level assignments.
- **Note:** Note any Red Flag on any turnaround leader competency, whether or not it is one you intended to assess.

Step 5: Take notes

- Take brief notes on interview details that will help you remember why you gave the candidate a particular rating.
- Also make a note of any other “Red Flag” responses, or concerns you have from the interview about a particular competency.
- Note if you do not have enough information to rate a competency of concern to you.

Individual Scoring Sheet – Critical Competencies

Candidate Name	Interviewer	Date	
Critical Competency List	Zone	Level	Notes
Achievement (ACH)	RF N TH SU	1 2 3 4 5 6	
Impact and Influence (I&I)	RF N TH SU	1 2 3 4 5 6	
Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	RF N TH SU	1 2 3 4 5 6	
Team Leadership (TL)	RF N TH SU	1 2 3 4 5 6	
Self-Confidence (SCF)	RF N TH SU	1 2 3 4 5 6	

RF = Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.
N = Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.
TH = Threshold Zone: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success (excellence likely *only* with significant leadership and support).
SU = Superior Zone: Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires (even without significant leadership and support).

Individual Scoring Sheet – Additional Competencies

Candidate Name	Interviewer						Date				
Additional Competencies List	Zone			Level			Notes				
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6	

RF = Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

N = Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

TH = Threshold Zone: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success (excellence likely *only* with significant leadership and support).

SU = Superior Zone: Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires (even without significant leadership and support).

School Turnaround Leaders

Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools

By Public Impact
For The Chicago Public Education Fund and
District of Columbia Public Schools
June 2008

Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools

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Guidelines for Choosing Among Candidates

Once you have conducted your interviews, the process of selecting candidates will depend on a number of variables, many of which are unique to your district. The following guidelines are offered for your consideration, with the understanding that each interview team will determine what works best given their circumstances.

Step 1: Determine What Competencies Have Been Assessed and Scored

As an interview team, look over your notes and rating sheets and determine whether you have enough data to assess each of the competencies.⁵ In cases where you **do not** have enough data, note this on the **Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet**. In cases where you **do** have enough information, note each candidate's zone (and level, if available) for each competency.

Step 2: Compare and Select Candidates

- Compare the strengths of the candidates, particularly in the critical competencies.
- Highlight top tier candidates.
- Compare extreme weaknesses (Red Flags on any competency, Neutrals on critical competencies) that might keep a candidate from succeeding despite strengths.
- Few candidates will have all of the competencies and skills needed at the highest levels.
- Make a note of the top candidate. Select a second or third choice, if possible, for specific positions.

Other considerations:

- If someone appears to be in the Superior Zone on all or most high priority competencies with no obvious red flags, a rapid, personal recruiting effort is appropriate.
- If someone is a mix of Threshold and Superior Zones, consider the candidate for second tier recruiting.
- A red flag on any competency is a “no hire” even if the person has other great strengths.
- If you have only candidates who score consistently in the Threshold Zone, give priority to those who score at higher levels within that.

⁵ Competencies selected from *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance*, Spencer and Spencer (1993).

Step 3: Plan for Induction

Immediately following the interview process is an ideal time to begin the larger induction process, because the candidate's strengths and weaknesses are fresh in everyone's mind. Consider spending a few minutes as an interview team taking initial notes on the types of support and guidance each candidate will need to be successful in his or her new position. Are there particular supports, guidance and/or resources that would help the candidate prepare to hit the ground running? Take note of these immediately.

Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet

		Candidate 1		2		3		4		5	
Name											
Competencies	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone
Driving for Results Cluster											
Achievement (ACH)											
Initiative and Persistence (I&P)											
Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)											
Planning Ahead (PLA)											

Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet

Candidate									
1		2		3		4		5	
Name									
Competencies	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone
Influencing for Results Cluster									
Impact and Influence (I&I)									
Team Leadership (TL)									
Developing Others (DO)									

Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet

		Candidate 1		2		3		4		5	
Name											
Competencies	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone
Problem Solving Cluster											
Analytical Thinking (AT)											
Conceptual Thinking (CT)											
Showing Confidence to Lead											
Self-Confidence (SCF)											

Appendix A

School Turnaround Leaders

Leader Competency Rating Levels

By Public Impact
For The Chicago Public Education Fund and
District of Columbia Public Schools
June 2008

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Complete Turnaround Leader Competency List and Definitions

Driving for Results Cluster – These enable a relentless focus on learning results.

- ☑ **Achievement:** The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.
- ☑ **Initiative and Persistence:** The drive and actions to do more than is expected or required in order to accomplish a challenging task.
- ☑ **Monitoring and Directiveness:** The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.
- ☑ **Planning Ahead:** A bias towards planning in order to derive future benefits or to avoid problems.

Influencing for Results Cluster – These enable working through and with others.

- ☑ **Impact and Influence:** Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking and actions of others.
- ☑ **Team Leadership:** Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.
- ☑ **Developing Others:** Influence with the specific intent to increase the short and long-term effectiveness of another person.

Problem Solving Cluster – These enable solving and simplifying complex problems.

- ☑ **Analytical Thinking:** The ability to break things down in a logical way and to recognize cause and effect.
- ☑ **Conceptual Thinking:** The ability to see patterns and links among seemingly unrelated things.

Showing Confidence to Lead – This competency is concerned with staying focused, committed, and self-assured.

- ☑ **Self-Confidence:** A personal belief in one's ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.

Turnaround Leader Competencies: Four Clusters of Competence

These are the competencies – or consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, acting and speaking – needed for school turnaround leader success. They were derived by “mapping” the cross-sector research on turnaround leader actions (see Appendix B) to high-quality competency studies of successful entrepreneurs and leaders in large organizations.⁶ The competencies chosen fit the activities that turnaround leaders share with leaders in these other contexts. Validation, refinement and further customization of these competencies will be possible as the number of successful school turnarounds grows and comparisons among more and less successful school turnaround leaders are possible. These competencies are arranged into four clusters of related capabilities.

Driving for Results Cluster – This cluster of competencies is concerned with the turnaround leader’s strong desire to achieve outstanding results and the task-oriented actions required for success. Competencies in this cluster include:

- Achievement
- Initiative and Persistence
- Monitoring and Directiveness
- Planning Ahead

Influencing for Results Cluster – This cluster of competencies is concerned with motivating others and influencing their thinking and behavior to obtain results. Turnaround leaders cannot accomplish change alone, but instead must rely on the work of others. Competencies in this cluster include:

- Impact and Influence
- Team Leadership
- Developing Others

Problem Solving Cluster – This cluster of competencies is concerned with leader’s thinking applied to organization goals and challenges. It includes analysis of data to inform decisions; making clear logical plans that people can follow; and ensuring a strong connection between school learning goals and classroom activity. Competencies in this cluster include:

- Analytical Thinking
- Conceptual Thinking

Showing Confidence to Lead – This competency, essentially the public display of self-confidence, stands alone and is concerned with staying visibly focused, committed, and self-assured despite the barrage of personal and professional attacks common during turnarounds.

- Self-Confidence

⁶ Competencies selected from *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance*, Spencer and Spencer (1993). Leader actions from *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organization Improvement*, Public Impact for the Center on Innovation and Improvement (2007) and *Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff*, Public Impact for the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006).

Driving for Results Cluster

This cluster of competencies is concerned with the turnaround leader's strong desire to achieve outstanding results and the task-oriented actions required for success. Major actions include setting high goals for the organization and making persistent, well-planned efforts to achieve these goals despite barriers.

Why it matters

Without significant competence in this cluster, a turnaround leader is unlikely to achieve a sharp increase in school performance results since former practices have not worked and must be changed, and multiple, significant barriers must be tackled to ensure improved student learning.

Driving for Results Cluster – These enable a relentless focus on learning results.

- ☑ **Achievement:** The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.
- ☑ **Initiative and Persistence:** The drive and actions to do more than is expected or required in order to accomplish a challenging task.
- ☑ **Monitoring and Directiveness:** The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.
- ☑ **Planning Ahead:** A bias towards planning in order to derive future benefits or to avoid problems.

Achievement

The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors	
Red Flag Zone	1	Low Concern for Work or Quality	Shows little concern for quality of work. Or expresses concern but not able to describe specific actions taken to do good work.	
	2	Moderate Concern for Work and Quality	Works to meet explicit standards required by others. Or sets own standard for work quality, but not a very difficult or clear standard. Or improves own work or work of team, but not in pursuit of a specific goal.	
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3 TH	Strong Concern for Work Goals and Quality Improvement	Sets challenging work goals for self (and/or team) and acts to meet them. Or sets challenging goals for self (and/or team) and tracks and touts progress.
		4	Prioritizes Goals and Tasks Based on Cost-Benefit	Carefully chooses challenging goals and actions (for self and others) based on cost-benefit analysis, such as time, money and other resources needed versus likely speed and magnitude of results.
	Superior	5 S	Pursuit of High-Risk Goals and Improvement	Takes significant personal or career risk or commits significant resources (time, money, etc.) to launch a new venture or attempt an unlikely change/improvement, and Takes multiple actions to minimize risk and ensure success (conduct research, anticipate barriers, plan carefully ahead, etc.), and Acts to engage the efforts of others for success.
		6	Persistent Pursuit of High-Risk Goals and Improvement	Sustains pursuit of Level 6 over time to ensure complete meeting of high-risk goals.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Initiative and Persistence

The drive and actions to do more than is expected or required in order to accomplish a challenging task.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone	1	Avoids Required Work	Does not show up for work reliably or requires extra supervision to get work done.
Neutral Zone	2	Independent Effort	Completes assigned work as required and without extra supervision, Or does not give up without trying one or two steps when a simple obstacle arises.
Potential Hire Zone	3 TH	Extra Effort	Works extra hours to complete work even when not required, Or takes on voluntary work tasks, Or routinely tackles moderate obstacles as they arise in routine work.
	4	Significant Extra Effort	Voluntarily initiates and follows through on new work project (not just a discrete task) that is not assigned by others, and tackles significant barriers as they arise.
	5	Extraordinary Effort	Acting without formal or explicit authority, takes personal or career risks and bends organization norms or rules to accomplish a work objective (not a personal agenda) despite significant obstacles or early failure.
Superior	6 S	Engages Others in Extraordinary Effort	Involves others in Level 5 effort, including people over whom the person has no formal authority.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Monitoring and Directiveness

The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone	1	Avoiding Direction	Gives in to others, even if conflicts with work goals. Or does not give directions or communicate expectations. (May justify by expressing concern with others liking them, hurting people's feelings or making others feel bad.)
Neutral Zone	2	Routine Directions	Gives directions about routine work, Or provides direction that is not explicit or detailed.
	3	Detailed Directions	Gives detailed direction needed to communicate to others what needs to be done to accomplish work tasks or to free own time for other work concerns.
	4	Asserts Needs	Says "no" to requests that are obviously unreasonable or that would harm work goals, Or manipulates situation so that others must comply.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	5 TH	Asserts High Standard for Compliance Sets high standard explicitly up front, Or gives clear initial orders, Or repeats expectation of high performance, Or insists in a demanding way that others comply.
		6	Openly Monitors Performance Publicly monitors and posts or communicates performance against standards.
	Superior	7 S	Personally Confronts Performance Problems Confronts people with performance problems (to gain compliance, not for developmental purposes), Or threatens consequences for performance shortfalls.
		8	Fires Low Performers Without regret, rids organization of low performers (following appropriate efforts to improve performance and all legal procedures).

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Planning Ahead

A bias toward planning in order to derive future benefit or to avoid problems.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone	1	Does Not Think Ahead	Focuses thinking on the past, Or fails to see current needs and opportunities, Or focuses on immediate needs, tasks and problems only.
	2	Fully Addresses Current Needs	Acts quickly, decisively and completely to address current problems and crises as they arise.
Neutral Zone	3	Plans up to Two Months in Advance	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems or potential opportunities and plans in advance to address these in this timeframe.
	4 TH	Plans 3 – 12 Months in Advance	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems or potential opportunities and plans or acts in advance to address these in this timeframe.
Potential Hire Zone	Superior	5 S	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems or potential opportunities and plans or acts in advance to address these in this timeframe.
		6	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems or potential opportunities and plans or acts in advance to address these in this timeframe.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Influencing for Results Cluster

This cluster of competencies is concerned with motivating others and influencing their thinking and behavior to obtain results. Turnaround leaders cannot accomplish change alone, but instead must rely on the work of others. They must use a wider variety of influencing tactics than most leaders – acting directive with subordinates when urgent action is essential, inspiring and visionary when discretionary effort of staff and others is needed, and influencing entirely through others rather than directly – as the situation requires. They also must address a complicated web of powerful stakeholders (staff, parents, unions, community, etc.) and resource providers (district office staff, special funders, management organization staff, etc.) to ensure support for – and reduce resistance to – successful change.

Why it matters

Leaders in a turnaround school must induce behaviors from staff members (and others) that are significantly different from those previously exhibited. Obtaining more and different effort from others is critical to obtaining better student learning results. They cannot obtain all of these new and enhanced behaviors by being directive (see Monitoring and Directiveness), but instead must identify and tap the needs, wants and underlying motives of others.

Influencing for Results Cluster – These enable working through and with others.

- ☑ **Impact and Influence:** Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking and actions of others.
- ☑ **Team Leadership:** Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.
- ☑ **Developing Others:** Influence with the specific intent to increase the short and long-term effectiveness of another person.

Impact and Influence

Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking and actions of others.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone	1	Personal Gain Tactics, Limited Persuasion	Uses negative behaviors for personal gain. Or does not act to influence others.
	2	No Adaptation to Audience	Prepares and presents data and logical arguments, but does not tailor to make them appealing or influential to the specific audience.
Neutral Zone	3	Tailors Single Action to Influence Audience	Thinks ahead about the likely reaction of audience, And adapts communication to obtain desired impact.
	4	Tailors Single, <i>Dramatic</i> Action to Influence	Takes one, dramatic action chosen to obtain a specific reaction from audience. (Threats do not count; see Directiveness.)
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold 5 TH	Tailors Two Actions to Influence Audience	Thinks ahead about the likely reaction of audience, And adapts communication to obtain desired impact, And shows “influence tenacity” by taking two (not necessarily dramatic) steps to influence.
	Superior 6 S	Tailors Three Actions or Uses Indirect Influence	Takes three or more steps chosen to influence, Or uses third party experts or trusted individuals to influence others, Or obtains individual support “behind the scenes,” Or chooses timing and delivery/withholding of information to influence.
	7	Complex Influence	Engages in a complex set of maneuvers with many people – personal communications, use of third parties, promotion decisions, sharing of power or information, working through chains of people for a “domino” influence effect – to obtain desired impact.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Team Leadership

Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors	
Red Flag Zone	1	Does Not Lead	Provides no direction, goals, roles, or meeting clarity when needed or asked, Or has not engaged in any roles, in work or volunteering, that require leadership of a team.	
Neutral Zone	2	Manages Logistics	Communicates agendas, time constraints and work tasks.	
	3	Keeps People Informed	Tells people affected by decisions or events what is happening, ensuring that people have information they need.	
	4	Manages Team Fairly	Uses formal authority fairly, treats people on team with respect and fairness.	
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	5 TH	Acts to Make Team Effective	Promotes team morale and enhances performance by taking actions that affect how people feel about the team and how well they perform on it. May include how work is assigned, who is hired and fired on team, and expressions of how these actions affect remaining team members performance and morale.
		6	Ensure Team's Opportunity to Perform	Obtains resources and people that the group needs to perform, And protects the group from outside influences that might prevent performance.
		7	Leads Team to Results	"Sells" the team mission, goals, and actions to its members, and then follows up to ensure that the team's work is done well.
	Superior	8 S	Communicates a Compelling Vision to Motivate Discretionary Effort	Motivates the team – and stakeholders who affect the team's work – with charismatic communications of the vision for the organization, resulting in excitement and large contribution of people's discretionary effort.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Developing Others

Influence with the specific intent to increase the short and long-term effectiveness of another person.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone	1	Does Not Develop	Discourages others with negative statements of potential and expectation, Or takes no action to develop others (even if expresses belief in others' ability).
	2	Gives Explicit Instructions	Tells others how to do their work when needed, makes helpful suggestions.
Neutral Zone	3	Explains Reasons for Instructions and Ensures Understanding	Tells others why they need to do work a certain way, Or ensures that others understand the work to be done.
	4 TH	Gives Basic Feedback	Provides specific feedback, both positive and negative, to help others improve.
Potential Hire Zone	Superior	5 S	Encourages and Helps after Failures Expresses positive expectation for future performance after a setback, and either Provides much more specific advice for tackling challenging assignments Or provides negative feedback in specific not global terms.
		6	Arranges Assignments and Training Ensures that others obtain the experiences and training they need to develop new skills and levels of capability, Or gets others to fix problems and figure out solutions themselves. (Does not include signing off on required training.)
		7	Designs New Development Creates a new program or materials to meet a developmental need.
		8	Fully Delegates Gives full responsibility for very challenging work to others as "stretch" experiences, with full latitude for choosing work steps and making mistakes from which to learn.
		9	Promotes for Development Promotes others as a reward for development or as a developmental opportunity.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Problem Solving Cluster

This cluster of competencies is concerned with thinking applied to organization goals and challenges. It includes analysis of data to inform decisions; making clear, logical plans that people can follow; and ensuring a strong connection between school learning goals and classroom activity. The thinking competencies are needed for higher levels of Driving for Results competencies and Influencing for Results competencies.

Why it matters

Leaders in a turnaround school use these competencies to identify organizational priorities, understand which tactics are working, identify and consider alternative approaches, and clarify steps to make organizational changes that will result in improved student learning.

Problem Solving Cluster – These enable solving and simplifying complex problems.

- ☑ **Analytical Thinking:** The ability to break things down in a logical way and to recognize cause and effect.

- ☑ **Conceptual Thinking:** The ability to see patterns and links among seemingly unrelated things

Analytical Thinking

The ability to break things down in a logical way and to recognize cause and effect.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone	1	Does Not Analyze or Plan	Responds to tasks as they arise, does not break work into steps or create lists, Or only follows steps created by someone else.
	2	Creates Lists	Creates simple lists of tasks or items.
Neutral Zone	3	Makes Limited Connections	Analyzes relationship among a few items, Or understands that A causes B, Or prioritizes a relatively simple list of tasks.
	4 TH	Makes Multiple Connections	Analyzes and notes the relationship among several items, Or organizes a complex activity into steps in a logical way (based on time, importance or other factors), Or understands several possible causes of events or results of events, Or anticipates multiple next steps and likely barriers.
Potential Hire Zone	5 S	Does Complicated Planning and Analysis	Breaks apart a complex problem or process into categories and subcategories down to basic steps or parts, Or analyzes a difficult problem from several different perspectives or using different criteria before arriving at a detailed solution.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Conceptual Thinking

The ability to see patterns and links among seemingly unrelated things.

Zone		Level	General Description	Specific behaviors
Red Flag Zone		1	Thinks Concretely or Using Well-Worn Rules	Expresses thinking very literally, Or uses others' rules or similar personal experiences to draw conclusions.
	Neutr al Zone	2	Sees Patterns	Notes similarities, differences, gaps, and trends in technical data or in a current situation versus past.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3 TH	Applies Known Complex Conceptual Tools	Using a known method of categorizing complex data, identifies what is most important or how things are related, Or applies past knowledge of similarities, differences, gaps, and trends to categorize new data or situations, Or make modifications to known categories to fit current data.
		Superior	4 S	Simplifies Complex Ideas
	5		Creates New Concepts	Identifies issues and problems not previously learned or identified by others.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Showing Confidence to Lead

This competency, essentially the public display of self-confidence, stands alone and is concerned with staying visibly focused, committed, and self-assured despite the barrage of personal and professional attacks common during turnarounds. It includes both presenting oneself to the world with statements of confidence, putting oneself in challenging situations, taking personal responsibility for mistakes, and following up with analysis and corrective action.

Why it matters

It is important for turnaround leaders, who must both feel and appear strong and committed during the challenging early turnaround phase.

Showing Confidence to Lead – This enables success in a highly challenging situation.

- Self-Confidence:** A personal belief in one's ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.

Self-Confidence

A personal belief in one's ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific behaviors	
Red Flag Zone	1	Feels or Acts Powerless	Publicly expresses lack of confidence in self, Or defers to others inappropriately, Or avoids challenges because of fear of failure.	
	2	Conducts Tasks Without Hesitation	Does work independently as needed.	
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3 TH	Acts Decisively and Forcefully	Makes decisions despite disagreements with peers or subordinates, Or acts outside explicitly granted authority (but without breaking rules).
		4	States Confidence in Self	Openly states own expertise or compares self positively with others, Or views self a key actor or originator in important situation, Or expresses confidence in own thinking.
		5	Justifies and Defends Confident Statements	Stands up for self and positions in conflicts, Or follows statements with actions that justify confident claims.
	Superior	6 S	Seeks Challenges	Expresses positive feelings about challenging assignments, Or seeks more challenge and responsibility, Or makes decisions and confident statements despite disagreement with those in power (boss, influential people).
		7	Seeks Extreme Challenge	Confronts other in power bluntly when needed, Or seeks extremely challenging situations.

Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role.

TH = Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success.

S = Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Appendix B

School Turnaround Leaders

Turnaround Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings

By Public Impact
For The Chicago Public Education Fund and
District of Columbia Public Schools
June 2008

Turnaround Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings

The actions listed in this section are those found consistently in cross-sector studies of turnarounds, or successful bad-to-great transformations.⁷ This research documented and analyzed cases in which public and private organizations that were failing by many measures made very rapid, dramatic performance improvements. (This stands in contrast both to slower, incremental improvements in already strong organizations and to closure followed by starting fresh entirely.)

In nearly all cases, these leaders identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs, and they use that early success to gain momentum. These new tactics often break organization norms or rules. The actions occur in a fast cycle of trying new tactics, discarding failed tactics and doing more of what works. Most turnaround efforts fail, because they are tried in very challenging situations. Repeated attempts – with a new leader, for example – may be critical to turnaround success in a large portion of schools.

The Most Important Turnaround Actions

Fortunately, the steps toward turnaround success are very consistent across sectors. The complete list of critical actions appears on the following page. But school leaders trying turnarounds must stay focused on accomplishing the most *critical, consistent success actions*. In nearly all cases, leaders of successful turnarounds:

- ☑ **Identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs**, and use that early success to gain momentum. While these “wins” are limited in scope, they are high-priority, not peripheral, elements of organization performance.
- ☑ **Break organization norms or rules** to deploy new tactics needed for early wins. Failed rules and routines are discarded when they inhibit success.
- ☑ **Act quickly in a fast cycle** of trying new tactics, measuring results, discarding failed tactics and doing more of what works (see diagram). Time is the enemy when the status quo is failure.

Fast Cycle of Actions in a Turnaround



⁷ Figure and actions from *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organization Improvement*, Public Impact for the Center on Innovation and Improvement (2007) and *Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff*, Public Impact for the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006).

Turnaround Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings (*continued*)⁸

The principal and lead teachers may use these in differing ways . . .

Initial Analysis and Problem Solving

- ◆ **Collect & Analyze Data:** Initially, turnaround leaders personally analyze data about the organization's performance to identify high-priority problems that can be fixed quickly.
- ◆ **Make Action Plan Based on Data:** Turnaround leaders make an action plan so that everyone involved knows specifically what they need to do differently. This allows people to focus on changing what they do, rather than worrying about impending change.

Driving for Results

- ◆ **Concentrate on Big, Fast Payoffs in Year 1:** Turnaround leaders concentrate on a few changes to achieve early, visible wins. They do this to achieve success in an important area, motivate others for further change, and reduce resistance by those who oppose change.
- ◆ **Implement Practices Even if Require Deviation:** Turnaround leaders deviate from organization norms or rules when needed to achieve early wins. In a failing organization, existing practices often contribute to failure. This shows that changes can lead to success.
- ◆ **Require All Staff to Change:** When turnaround leaders implement an action plan, change is mandatory, not optional.
- ◆ **Make Necessary Staff Replacements:** Successful turnaround leaders typically do not replace all or most staff but often replace some senior leaders. After initial turnaround success, staff who do not make needed changes either leave or are removed by the leader.
- ◆ **Focus on Successful Tactics; Halt Others:** Successful turnaround leaders quickly discard tactics that do not work and spend more money and time on tactics that work. This pruning and growing process focuses limited resources where they will best improve results.
- ◆ **Do Not Tout Progress as Ultimate Success:** Turnaround leaders are not satisfied with partial success. They report progress, but keep the organization focused on high goals. When a goal is met, they are likely to raise the bar. Merely better is not good enough.

Influencing Inside and Outside the Organization

- ◆ **Communicate a Positive Vision:** Turnaround leaders motivate others to contribute their discretionary effort by communicating a clear picture of success and its benefits.
- ◆ **Help Staff Personally Feel Problems:** Turnaround leaders use various tactics to help staff empathize with – or “put themselves in the shoes of” – those whom they serve. This helps staff feel the problems that the status quo is causing and feel motivated to change.
- ◆ **Gain Support of Key Influencers:** Turnaround leaders gain support of trusted influencers among staff and community and then work through these people to influence others.
- ◆ **Silence Critics with Speedy Success:** Early, visible wins are used not just for success in their own right, but to make it harder for others to oppose further change. This reduces leader time spent addressing “politics” and increases time spent managing for results.

Measuring, Reporting (and Improving)

- ◆ **Measure and Report Progress Frequently:** Turnaround leaders set up systems to measure and report interim results often. This enables the rapid discard of failed tactics and increase of successful tactics essential for fast results.
- ◆ **Require Decision Makers to Share Data and Problem Solve:** Turnaround leaders share key staff results visibly, to highlight those who do not change and reward those who do and succeed. This shifts meetings from blaming and excuses to problem solving.

⁸ *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organization Improvement*, Public Impact for the Center on Innovation and Improvement (2007) and *Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff*, Public Impact for the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006).