THE CENTER ON SCHOOL TURNAROUND WestEd

The State Role in School Turnaround

Emerging Best Practices

Lauren Morando Rhim
& Sam Redding
EDITORS

The State Role in School Turnaround
Emerging Best Practices

Lauren Morando Rhim & Sam Redding
Editors

WestEd
WestEd.org

WestEd, 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242

WestEd—a national nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency—works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has 16 offices nationwide, from Boston and Washington to Arizona and California, with headquarters in San Francisco. More information about WestEd is available at WestEd.org.

http://centeronschoolturnaround.org

This work was supported by the Center on School Turnaround through funding from the U.S. Department of Education, PR/Award Number S283B120015. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

The Center on School Turnaround, a partnership of WestEd and the Academic Development Institute (ADI), the Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education at the University of Virginia, and the National Implementation Research Network, is part of the federal network of fifteen Regional Comprehensive Centers, serving individual states or clusters of states, and seven national Content Centers.

Suggested citation for this volume:

Rhim, L. M., & Redding, S. (Eds). (2014). *The state role in turnaround: Emerging best practices*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the dynamic authors who agreed to temporarily pause their important work to synthesize and share their evolving insights. These emerging insights are critical to accelerating turnaround work as the field is literally building the plane flying down the runway. External reviewers, Susan Moulden-Horton and Scott Norton, provided thoughtful and much appreciated reviews of the chapters. The leadership team of the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd—Fred Tempes, Sylvie Hale, and Scott Sargent—provided invaluable feedback as we worked to translate our vision for the book into a tangible deliverable that would be of value to the field. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge the editing team at Academic Development Institute—Pam Sheley and Lori Thomas—for their tireless efforts to prepare the chapters to ensure a coherent volume.

Table of Contents

Foreword

Bryan Hassel, Co-Director of Public Impact

One does not have to look past the table of contents of this volume to grasp the enormity of the task facing state leaders when it comes to school turnaround. In recent years, states have taken center stage in the effort to address chronic low achievement in the nation's schools. In part, this move has come from state leaders themselves, as governors, chief state school officers, and legislators have sought to accelerate change in these schools. Federal policy and funding streams have also elevated the state's role in successive waves. From No Child Left Behind's requirements around "restructuring" to the inclusion of low-achieving schools as one of four "assurance areas" in programs such as Race to the Top, federal policymakers have asked states to play an increasing role in addressing persistent school failure.

The book's chapters delve into the state's role in a wide range of specific topics related to school turnaround, and state leaders can find a great deal of guidance on all of the specific challenges. In this foreword, the editors asked me to take a step back and look at an overarching state role: **making policy that guides turnaround work within the state.**[1] Every state has a set of policies on school turnaround. These typically begin with a section of state statutes describing how schools are identified as low-achieving and outlining the consequences. State boards of education and state education agencies take these statutory provisions and build out a more detailed set of processes and strategies that guide state action. Altogether, these laws and guiding documents make up the state's policy on school turnaround.

[1]This foreword draws heavily on Public Impact's prior work on school turnaround and "Opportunity Culture" staffing designs by Emily Ayscue Hassel and other teammates. It draws on remarks made by Dr. Hassel at the September 2013 convening of states by the Center on School Turnaround and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of School Turnaround.

Why Focus on Policy?

The obvious reason is that policy is what gives states the leverage to change what happens in districts and schools so that the millions of students in low-achieving schools can have a better future. State officials are a long way away from the real action in the classrooms and teachers' lounges of the schools they are seeking to influence through turnaround strategies. Policy is the main tool states have to make a difference from that relatively remote position.

But policy is also important because it is the formal embodiment of the states' message to parents, educators, and citizens about the states' priorities, in this case, the priority states place on addressing the tragedy of chronically failing schools. The states' turnaround policies express the states' commitment to strategies that have the potential to flip the odds for kids who attend those schools. Of course, state leaders have other ways of communicating these messages. As Rhim and Redding write in their chapter entitled "Leveraging the Bully Pulpit": "When it comes to school turnaround efforts, chiefs can use the position to catalyze, support, enable, and sustain school turnaround efforts. Given limited resources at their disposal, effectively optimizing the bully pulpit is a key tool in a state chief's toolbox" (p. 32). Yet actions, as they say, speak louder than words. Effectively messaging the states' intent when it comes to turnaround ideally includes a vigorous use of the bully pulpit—backed up by the hard policies that put those words into action.

Policy is also the key to sustainability. When I look at the work states are doing, it is often inspiring. But I quickly start to worry that it is temporary. In part, this worry stems from the fact that much of the funding states are using is temporary, flowing from Race to the Top dollars or School Improvement Grant funds that may not persist. I also worry because the vigorous action I see often depends on the robust leadership of state officials: state chiefs, governors, and other leaders within states. What will keep all of this good work going when funding streams turn into a trickle, the champion governor leaves office, or when critical SEA officials retire or take the revolving door into the private sector? Policies are a states' main chance of sustaining gains over time by putting into law and agency policies the key elements of the states' strategy so they can last.

Policy related to school turnaround is complex and multifaceted. Instead of trying to cover the full range of important policies comprehensively, I will focus in this foreword on five policy levers that share two characteristics. First, they are of vital importance to states' success as leaders of the school turnaround effort. Second, very few states have put all five of these policies in place. Almost every state, possibly all, would benefit from holding up their policies against these five points and asking where there is room for improvement.

Set Sights High

One critical aspect of state policy is establishing a set of specific, ambitious goals for eliminating chronic low performance within a reasonable timeline. Let me unpack this concept a little. One level of this goal-set is a clear definition of success at the school level. If a school is low-achieving, what does it mean to "turn around"? Ideally, it means something more than just going from "very low" to "low." Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD), for example, says it wants to move schools from the bottom 5% to the top 25%. Is that too ambitious? Reasonable people might disagree. What states want to avoid is a policy that declares "mission accomplished" based on, say, a 10 percentage point rise in proficiency rates from 30% to 40%.

A second level is the statewide view. Taking a state's set of persistently low-achieving schools as a group, what does success look like over the next year, three years, and five years? Not all schools will meet an ambitious target the first time around. In fact, 30% on the first try would be on par with cross-sector experience and quite good relative to the abysmal success rate of many school turnaround initiatives. That does not mean, though, that states need to settle for 30% as their long-term ambition. As my colleagues and I have written in *Try Try Again*, detecting efforts that are off track early and redirecting can shift some initial missteps into successes, sending long-term success rates over 80%, even if only 20% or 30% of initial attempts work well.

What is important here, therefore, is for the state to select and communicate a sense of trajectory. After one year, we are aiming for, say, 25% of our turnaround schools to have crossed the success threshold. Then we expect that percentage to rise steadily so that after five years, 80% of the schools are over the mark. This kind of trajectory allows state officials and others to watch progress and then make adjustments. This communicates an ambitious target over time but also a realistic path to get there.

Of course, goals are just goals. They only come to life if they drive a performance management system that also includes:

- A **theory of action** that spells out how the state's strategies will achieve its goals;
- **Alignment of resources** to support those strategies;
- **Collection of data** and ongoing assessment of results and leading indicators;
- **Accountability for results**, which involves taking action based on the achievement or non-achievement of goals; and
- **Communicating actively** to the public about how the schools and the state are progressing along the trajectory.

But this all starts with setting sights high.

Clear Policy Barriers

Turning around a failing organization is challenging even if leaders have all the running room they could ever want. But in public education, numerous policy constraints make it even more difficult to turn around schools and succeed.

Here, I zero in on two categories of constraint that are most significant. One is constraints related to staffing turnaround schools. The effectiveness of the school leadership and teaching force is what we all know makes the most difference in schools and especially turnaround schools. Yet state and local policies often make it hard to staff turnaround schools well. Examples include: ineffective evaluation systems, restrictive certification rules, rigid seniority-based placement, hurdles to dismissing ineffective performers, salary scales that make it difficult to reward great leaders and teachers for taking on a challenge and succeeding, and rules that limit the number of students a great teacher can have. These all make the already hard task of turnaround even harder.

The same goes for the second category: resource use. Policy constraints include rigid line-item budgets that require, for example, using a certain staffing model within a school, which gets in the way of schools redesigning their operations and using teachers and new teaching roles to give more kids access to great teachers. Other policies may limit schools' and districts' ability to carry funds over from one year to the next, making it impossible for them to "save" and "invest" in activities that might well pay off for the long-term, such as building leadership pipelines.

States can act on this set of constraints in two ways. First, they can inventory their own state policies and make a plan for eliminating or creating exceptions for those that hinder turnarounds. Second, states can use the "strings" they attach to funding and their accountability policies to insist that districts remove barriers as well, because many of these constraints are embodied in local policies and agreements. By clearing state-caused barriers directly and by inducing local officials to drop their own shackles, state leaders can do a great deal to pave the way for successful school turnarounds.

Get Serious About Talent

By "talent," I mean especially the teachers, leaders, and organizations that operate turnaround schools. I say "get serious" because, in my view, there has been a lot of effort on this front, but it generally has not led to a dramatic talent shift that is needed in turnaround schools.

As we think about talent, we tend to think first about how to "push" talent into failing schools—by creating pipelines. This is critical work that we can keep doing better.

But I would urge equal attention to "pulling" talent by making target schools dramatically better places to work in and lead. Part of this is clearing the barriers I just mentioned. Top-notch leaders will not be attracted to organizations in

which they cannot build and shape their teams and allocate resources in ways that support their strategic leadership.

Another part of pulling talent in is creating real career paths for both teachers and leaders that enable advancement without leaving the work they love doing. For excellent teachers, that means being able to sign up to work in a turnaround school and not face a career of just teaching a single class or normal load of classes forever, without any way to advance. Instead, it means offering great teachers the chance to lead teams of other teachers, to direct on-the-job professional learning from their peers, and to have an effect on more students, without becoming an administrator. These are roles my colleagues and I have written about in our *Opportunity Culture* series of publications. When a set of Charlotte, North Carolina-based schools created 19 such positions in turnaround schools in early 2013, over 700 people applied from the around the country, including many who had moved out of teaching into administration and were eager for the chance to come back to teaching. In schools that traditionally had trouble filling vacancies, these new roles created a dramatic influx of talent.

For leaders, it means enabling successful turnaround principals to take the next challenge, such as leading a small network of schools, like a feeder pattern, and helping the building-level school principals become the next great turnaround leaders. For both, it means getting serious about compensation. In my view, great teachers and leaders in public education generally earn far below what they contribute to their students' long-term fortunes. The deficit is especially acute in turnaround schools, where the challenges are intense and the hours are, or need to be, longer. Though I would support devoting more resources to raising pay in turnaround schools, states need not wait for that. A top priority for turnaround schools should be thinking of ways to reorganize their operations to free money to make their schools as attractive as possible to teachers and leaders they need.

Creating a Real "Or Else"

Today, most states lack a viable course of action if schools and districts do not improve. Exceptions exist. Several states now have authority to take over individual schools and operate them or, more likely, partner with external organizations, and in extreme cases of district-wide failure, the authority to take over and operate districts. But these powers—and their effective use—are still rare.

Yet, an "or else" would be a valuable instrument in the hands of states for two reasons. First, the threat of state takeover might induce some districts to do what they need to do to improve persistently low-achieving schools. Second, when districts and schools still fall short despite the threat, a state with an "or else" does not have to settle for that. It can take action on its own to improve school performance.

A real "or else" has three components:

- **Authority**—the legal green light to act, likely in the form of a state statute authorizing the state to take certain actions in cases of schools or districts that chronically fall below some performance level and have not improved sufficiently despite other interventions.
- **Theory of action**—spelling out what the state will do once it assumes control of a school or district. Will it operate schools directly? Find outside operators to manage the schools? In either case, what role will the state agency play and for how long?
- **Capacity to execute**—Taking over and operating failing schools and districts is new territory for almost every state. It requires different staffing, different partners, and different ways rather than trying to operate the schools in the traditional way, only better. Building that capacity is an essential ingredient to having a real "or else" at the state level.

Demand Sustainability

With funding streams such as school improvement grants, Race to the Top, and special state appropriations, one of the phenomena we see far too often is the tendency to flow money into costs that are recurring—in the sense that they will not go away. Even if a turnaround succeeds, most turnaround schools will still be operating in very challenging environments, such as high-poverty neighborhoods. They will continue to need to deploy strategies like extended school days and years, higher compensation to attract and keep great teachers and leaders, and access to the growing array of learning technology.

Since these costs will not go away, states need to insist that districts and schools find ways to fund them beyond the temporary streams. Fortunately, there is a growing set of tools and models to help with this, from Education Resource Strategies tools to help districts analyze their resource use to Public Impact's tools on reallocating money to pay teachers more.

This does not mean special state and federal funds have no role. Rather, the point is that states need the discipline to focus 100% of special and temporary money on what I would call "investments": spending that somehow increases the capacity of schools and the system to operate successfully and sustainably without continued funding.

For example:

- Pipelines that produce teachers, leaders, and school operators who then "pay off" for years;
- Up-front spending and redesigning school operations, leading to more sustainable models;
- Investing in technology and facilities changes necessitated by the new design.

- Other transition costs—such as paying contractual obligations incurred under old systems in order to make way for new.

If turnaround schools put all temporary funding into such "investments" and paid for recurring costs with recurring funds, their long-term chance of success would be greatly enhanced.

Conclusion

I realize that these five policy priorities are relatively easy to write up in a foreword, but having these policies enacted in real states is quite another matter. This is why these five items are still on the "to do list" after several years of hard policy work in most states. I also realize that many of these policies lie outside the purview of state education agencies, resting instead with state legislatures. Yet, these challenges are nothing new for state agency leaders. Policy change is their best chance to make dramatic, lasting improvements for the millions of students who attend persistently low-achieving schools.

Introduction to the State Role in School Turnaround: Emerging Best Practice

Lauren Morando Rhim and Sam Redding

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) was created to provide technical assistance and identify, synthesize, and disseminate research-based practices and emerging promising practices for the purpose of increasing state education agency (SEA) capacity to support districts and schools to turn around their lowest performing schools and contribute to our collective knowledge of effective and sustainable school turnaround strategies. Four objectives that reflect the key levers SEA's are using to drive, support, and sustain effective district and turnaround efforts guide the Center's work:

- Advocating and building support for schools and districts as they work to turn around the lowest performing schools
- Creating a pro-turnaround statutory and regulatory environment
- Administering and managing turnaround efforts effectively
- Providing targeted and timely technical assistance to schools and districts

As the first major publication of the CST, this book is organized according to these four objectives that guide our work. The research base on effective school turnarounds, and specifically the critical role of the SEA, is evolving and arguably not fully developed. We have yet to witness large-scale research on the potential impact of individual SEAs or isolate specific actions to discern their quantifiable impact on targeted change efforts focused on changing both districts and schools. The chapter authors represent a portfolio of practitioners and scholars actively engaged in these efforts. Building on existing research, their experiences and observation of trends provide the emerging outlines of best practice and are therefore worth documenting and discussing.

Advocating and Building Support for Schools and Districts as They Work to Turn Around the Lowest Performing Schools

School turnaround differs substantially from school improvement in that it calls for urgent and often disruptive change efforts. This is in contrast to incremental or continuous improvement that has been characteristic of change efforts for the last 20 years. Simply put, school turnaround is *not* more school improvement or school improvement plus. School turnaround efforts greatly challenge the status quo and significantly impact a wide variety of audiences, including school administrators, teachers, families, and community members. To ensure the success of turnaround efforts across their respective states, SEAs need to cultivate buy-in for the reforms, continuously advocate for tough changes, and communicate early and often to a wide range of stakeholders.

The key actors responsible for advocating and building support for school turnaround work are the state board of education, chief state school officer, and local school boards. While state boards create the pro-turnaround statutory and regulatory environment, the state chief and local school boards are highly visible actors who are uniquely positioned to encourage or, conversely, to impede focused turnaround efforts. The two chapters in this section explore the roles and responsibilities of state chiefs and local school boards. In *The Chief: Leveraging the Bully Pulpit to Drive Turnaround*, Rhim and Redding explore the political context state chiefs must navigate, and they identify key strategies chiefs can use to optimize their bully pulpit to instill a sense of urgency for districts and schools to embark upon turnaround and articulate specific strategies. Building on prior research regarding the role of school boards in school turnaround efforts, in *Engaging Local School Boards to Drive, Support, and Sustain Effective Turnaround Efforts*, Rhim outlines the roles and responsibilities of local boards and describes specific actions SEAs can take to build local board capacity to foster a meaningful role in district turnaround efforts. Absent intentional efforts to engage these key stakeholders, superintendents and building leaders may encounter resistance from local boards that are unclear about the need or potential value of disruptive change efforts.

Creating a Pro-Turnaround Statutory and Regulatory Environment

When working to implement dramatic changes to successfully turn around low-performing schools, school and district staff need to work within the context of state laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. Some of these foster practices that support effective school turnaround while others prohibit or inhibit them. In supporting districts as they work to turn around struggling schools, SEAs need to review policies, procedures, and regulatory structures to identify those that limit the flexibility of districts to take the dramatic action necessary to turn around chronically low performers—and work to eliminate them or grant waivers for certain requirements when possible.

In the *Evolution of Turnaround*, Redding and Rhim review the progression of school improvement efforts and programs, such as comprehensive school reform, school restructuring, and most recently, school improvement grants (SIG) and the ever-morphing role of the SEA in these efforts. The chapter reviews the U.S. Department of Education's seven research-based turnaround principles and wraps up with a discussion about how the current strategy differs from prior efforts and identifies emerging indicators of success.

State policies and district structures represent the context that shapes school turnaround, but personnel are the key drivers that make or break turnaround initiatives. Reflecting on the central role of teachers and leaders in turnaround, Woodruff and Clark share knowledge emerging from their work to apply lessons from the private sector to public education efforts to build effective human resources practices in *Human Capital Pipelines: Examining the Role of the SEA*. The chapter highlights the SEAs' roles in developing both policies and programs to recruit and retain high-quality leaders and instructional personnel that can benefit districts statewide. Building on the critical importance of personnel in school turnaround, Futernick and Urbanski examine steps SEAs can take to foster labor–management relationships that are more productive. The chapter, *Successful School Turnaround Through Labor–Management Partnerships*, introduces SEAs to key findings from case study research on the impact of labor–management collaboration on school policy and practice and shows how this collaboration is breaking down the fierce resistance to change that has hampered so many turnaround efforts. The chapter also offers specific recommendations to SEAs based on the success several have had promoting a climate of trust, innovation, and collaboration among local stakeholders in their states.

In *Building, Providing, and Supporting Functional Data Systems*, members of the University of Virginia's Partnership for Leaders in Education turnaround program present the case that monitoring and data are the critical building blocks of any effective school turnaround. The authors outline the potential for comprehensive data use at all levels and share practical advice for states and districts on how to use performance and behavioral data to improve decisions in a variety of contexts. Drawing on expertise gleaned from working with over 200 schools in dozens of school districts across the country, the chapter explores the type of data systems districts and schools engaged in school turnaround require and what states can do to create state-level data systems that work for school turnaround.

Administering and Managing Turnaround Efforts Effectively

With the infusion of unprecedented levels of funding under the revamped SIG program in 2010, SEA responsibilities related to administering turnaround programs significantly increased. This infusion has further stretched already lean state agencies traditionally focused on compliance and monitoring. SEAs

have approached their expanded responsibilities by creating a variety of internal structures and programs and leveraging external expertise. The third section of the book explores the various approaches and structures states are using to manage effective turnaround in districts across their respective states.

Cohen and Segal's chapter, *The State of the State: New SEA Structures for a New Approach to Turnaround*, examines existing literature on SEA organizations and how those organizations provide support for schools and districts. While there are a range of approaches and organizational structures, the authors pay particular attention to shifting SEA practices and culture to better support districts, attending to the SEA's reorganization, and the variety of SEA structures and activities being implemented to support turnaround.

In light of delays in the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act and growing concerns about the majority of schools across the nation being identified as not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) extended SEAs the option to request flexibility from specific aspects of the law. The flexibility was offered in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. States have designed their accountability and support systems in a variety of ways that reflect their unique circumstances. Hane's and Perlman's chapter on *The State Process for Turnaround* describes how several states addressed the turnaround process in their ESEA Flexibility Requests.

The use of technology is as indelibly linked to the thought of schooling as the one-room schoolhouse was a century ago. As part of a comprehensive initiative to advance the transformation of American education, the Obama administration and the USDE are encouraging a culture of learning powered by technology. In *How the SEA Leverages Technology to Accelerate Turnaround*, Twyman focuses on how technology—assuming adequate leadership, resources, and supports—can accelerate improved student outcomes in an SEA-driven school improvement or school turnaround endeavor. The use of technology across seven areas (i.e., learning and instruction, motivation, access, data, teacher training, systems and processes, learning analytics) is described and supported by examples of research or exemplary programs.

In *Evaluating the State Turnaround Strategy*, Aladjem outlines steps states are taking to track and evaluate their turnaround work in order to make mid-course corrections and assess impact. Rather than explore how to evaluate SIG efforts per se, this chapter provides examples of how SEAs evaluate their own work to implement SIG. The object of evaluation for this chapter is not the schools, teachers, or students who ultimately benefit from SIG, but rather, the work of states that impacts schools, teachers, and students. The central questions driving this chapter are: "How can states be reflective about their own practice?" and "What lessons can states learn from other states?"

Providing Targeted and Timely Technical Assistance to Schools and Districts

In addition to their traditional compliance-related functions, SEAs need to embrace their support and technical assistance-related responsibilities to foster effective and sustainable turnaround efforts across their states. Just as Comprehensive Centers are charged with building SEAs' capacity, SEAs are charged with building the capacity of their local educational agencies (LEAs) and individual schools. LEAs and schools embarking upon bold turnaround efforts need access to research and emerging promising practices. To provide effective and meaningful technical assistance, SEAs need to identify, leverage, and repurpose existing resources, as well as those of other agencies and groups, on topics that are critical to turnaround success. SEAs also need to institute statewide system of supports and assistance through which they can effectively share these resources. The fourth and final section of the book focuses on the role of SEAs in providing technical assistance to districts and schools to drive, enable, and support successful turnaround efforts.

The responsibility of SEAs to directly support school turnaround has expanded under No Child Left Behind, while at the same time, budget cuts and consequent staff reductions have decreased the resources available for SEAs to engage in direct technical assistance to districts and schools. In light of these contextual realities, SEAs must explore possible collaboration with external entities to build local capacity to support school turnaround. In *Engaging State Intermediate Agencies to Support School Turnaround*, Reed and Partridge draw from their experience in Texas to describe the role of education service agencies (ESAs) to influence the interpretation and implementation of policies and practices to turn around low-performing schools and districts. The chapter describes a successful partnership between an SEA, an ESA, local school districts, and an external provider as an example of what is possible when an SEA and an ESA engage in creative collaboration to address the needs of a state's lowest performing schools.

Schools, districts, and states utilize private companies to provide a variety of educational, capital, and operational services. The engagement of external partners for the purpose of turning around schools accelerated in 2010 under the revised federal school improvement grant program that encouraged the use of external partners in a more comprehensive way. In *External Partners: Navigating the Marketing: SEA Role in Helping Districts Develop Productive Relationships with External Providers*, Corbett explores the role of the SEA in assisting districts to develop capacity to select providers and negotiate strong performance contracts.

With an eye toward leveraging internal expertise, Communities of Practice (CoPs) can be an important component of a state's turnaround-focused technical assistance efforts through peer-to-peer, face-to-face, and online collaborative

activities within states, districts, and schools. Coupled with existing state systems of support, CoPs have the potential to transform how states support their turnaround LEAs by increasing the SEA's capacity to deliver technical assistance, disseminate key resources, develop networks, and foster collaborative relationships. In *Turnaround Communities of Practice and Sharing Best Practices*, Stuart, Hale, and Duffield highlight the use of CoPs by states to collaborate with multiple stakeholders to strengthen technical assistance, curate best practices, and support the implementation of these practices within local district and school contexts.

Shifting from general technical assistance to focused efforts for the benefit of specific populations, in the final section of the book, the authors explore issues unique to English language learners and small and rural communities that have promise to accelerate turnaround efforts. Linquanti's chapter explores issues involved with *Fostering Success for English Language Learners in Turnaround Initiatives*. This chapter lays out a framework of fundamental considerations with respect to English learners that fosters a greater understanding of their strengths and needs. It examines the opportunities and risks for improving English language instruction and learning in the current context of next-generation standards and assessments and provides examples of innovative SEA practices for supporting local district and school improvement.

In *Building Rural District Capacity for Turnaround*, Redding and Walberg outline the distinct responsibility SEAs have to intentionally build the capacity of rural school districts. Whereas large urban districts can have more resources and capacity than their respective SEAs, rural districts must rely more heavily on SEAs to access resources and build capacity. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau and her colleagues outline strategies to turnaround low-performing rural schools—including structured efforts to build rural school board capacity—in their chapter, *In Big Sky Hope, How Montana's SEA Supports Turnaround in American Indian Schools*. Building on themes presented in the chapter on turnaround efforts in Montana, Sheley's chapter on *Building Leadership Capacity in Native American Schools* introduces the Bureau of Indian Education's Rapid Improvement Leader Project that entailed providing targeted professional development and mentorship to school-level leaders charged with turning around schools located in Native American reservations.

As SEA leaders strive to optimize their authority and resources to drive robust school turnaround efforts that will generate sustainable improvements, intentionally constructing an environment that is conducive to change is imperative. Introducing the structures required to manage the effort and providing targeted supports to build essential capacity are critical to long-term success.

Evolution of School Turnaround

Sam Redding and Lauren Morando Rhim

School turnaround in the United States is a recent policy initiative that follows two decades of efforts to apply substantial interventions to sharply elevate the performance trajectory of persistently low-achieving schools. Unlike prior school improvement efforts that sought to implement change over three to five years, the focus of turnaround is rapid and dramatic improvement for the lowest performing schools—schools that had not responded to prior incremental efforts. School turnaround arrived fully at center stage in 2009 when newly appointed Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the U.S. Department of Education goal of turning around the nation's lowest performing 5% of schools. The revamped School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, fueled by funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), provided states with criteria for identifying eligible schools and enabled states to establish competitions for LEAs to seek the SIG funding. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education made turnaround a key component of its Race to the Top (RTTT) competition for states (and later for LEAs). The U.S. Department of Education also established a new Office of School Turnaround. The following chronology of national efforts to improve our schools provides background context that is essential to understanding the current strategies being promoted at both the federal and state level; the current approach to turning around the lowest performing schools is largely driven by the shortcomings of prior efforts.

School Performance as a National Issue

A matter of national defense. As the historians of American education tell the story, the tradition of public education as a matter of local interest was shaken when Sputnik, the Soviet Union's unmanned satellite, appeared in the clear night sky, orbiting earth in October of 1957. Average Americans may not

have drawn a connection between this technological master feat by a feared enemy nation and their children's cozy neighborhood school, but governmental officials did. We were falling behind in the race to space because our schools were not preparing the scientists, engineers, and mathematicians who would enable us to keep pace with the communist adversaries. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, found common ground among divergent critiques of root causes of inadequate school performance in proposing both increased federal financial assistance and higher standards in science, math, and language as a matter of national defense (Jeynes, 2007).

A matter of equity and opportunity. In the 1960s and 1970s, education ascended further as a focus of national interest, now riding the crest of concern for equity for minorities, as a remedy for poverty, and as just treatment for children with disabilities. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 brought the federal government to the stage as a significant player in what had been primarily a state and local enterprise. Federal courts oversaw school desegregation across the country. The 1970s enlarged the scope of national attention to inequalities with the Title IX (1972) prohibition of unequal allocation of resources and program opportunities between the sexes and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), the precursor to the Individuals with Disability Education Act, which sought greater educational opportunity for children with disabilities (Jeynes, 2007).

A matter of international competition. In 1980, Congress, at the urging of President Jimmy Carter, authorized the formation of the U.S. Department of Education. President Ronald W. Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education asserted in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) that America's pursuit of equity in education must be matched with regard for quality. *A Nation at Risk* showed that our students' academic performance was unfavorably contrasted with students in other nations.

The effective schools research (see, for example, Edmonds, 1979) that emerged in the years just prior to *A Nation at Risk* had already demonstrated that school practices varied, and that some schools did a better job than others in achieving satisfactory results with similar populations of children. The scores on college entrance exams had declined steadily since the mid-1960s; SAT results descended during those years to their low point in 1980. Scores on most national and state tests fell similarly during this same span of years (Ravitch, 2000).

State initiative with federal encouragement for standards and research-based models. In the 1990s, the states' governors looked ahead to the new century and set national goals for education (National Education Goals Panel, 1995). These goals were codified in 1994 in Congress's Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which endorsed learning standards and standards-based assessments as ways to measure progress toward national goals. The reauthorization of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Improving America's Schools) in the same year called upon states to build systems of standards and assessments and to provide support for schools to improve. President Clinton, in 1996, signaled a return to basics with his recommendation to end social promotion and advance students based on the merits of their accomplishments. In 1998, the Reading Excellence Act emphasized the importance of direct instruction and phonics in reading instruction, presaging the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (2000). The 1990s closed with comprehensive school reform spreading research-based models of effective school practice across the country. Fueled by federal dollars, the states erected standards-based curricula and assessments (Redding, 2007).

Strong accountability for school performance for all student groups. By 2002 when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under the new administration of President George W. Bush, America was determined to achieve both equity and quality in public education. Achieved learning varied too widely from group to group and from school to school, indicating that opportunity was not equal for all. Standards and their concomitant assessments provided a measure of progress, and under NCLB progress would be measured for each group of students. NCLB sought to close the achievement gap between ethnic groups, between rich and poor, between children with disabilities and those without, and between English language natives and English language learners.

Focus on the lowest-achieving schools, world-class standards, and innovation. When Arne Duncan, the superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools took the helm as U.S. Secretary of Education under newly elected President Barack Obama in 2009, the nation was reeling from a serious economic downturn. With a surge of federal funding to stimulate the economy, Duncan laid out an aggressive agenda for K–12 education. The nation would rid itself of pockets of low achievement by turning around its lowest-performing 5,000 schools. New standards would apply world-class rigor to ensure that all students graduated ready for college and career. Innovation and technology would usher in a new era of high expectation and high accomplishment. America's schools were the vehicle for renewed economic prosperity.

Improving Low-Achieving Schools

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

In 1997, Congress authorized the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRDP) to provide three years of funding to schools that adopted research-based improvement models. The CSRDP was not targeted to the lowest performing schools but was channeled to Title I schools (schools with significant levels of student poverty) that were generally performing below expectations. More than 6,000 schools participated in the CSRDP, implementing

more than 500 models. Evaluation of the results was inconsistent, with some models investing in significant evaluations and others not. One study found positive results early in the CSRDP implementation, concluding that the effects of the CSRDP were stronger than other initiatives in similar schools (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003). An analysis by the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center (CSRQC) at the American Institutes for Research (2006), however, found only two elementary school models, both instructionally focused and prescriptive, to show moderate strength of effect. CSRQC found no middle school or high school models with evaluations that showed moderate strength of effect. No models at any grade level demonstrated a strong effect.

Restructuring Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) outlined a progression of sanctions that states and districts were to apply for Title I schools making inadequate yearly progress. Restructuring, for schools that had not achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) for six years, was the most severe intervention. At this point, the district was to apply one of four remedies:

1. State take-over of the school from the district
2. Turnaround—usually change in leadership and other significant changes
3. Reopen the school as a charter school
4. Contract to an Education Management Organization (EMO) to operate the school
5. Other—akin to comprehensive school reform, as determined by the district

The Center on Education Policy (CEP, 2009) found that in the five states it studied, 89% to 96% of the restructuring schools (varying by state) had chosen the "other" option, and positive results were scarce. By 2009, more than 5,000 schools (10% of Title I schools) were subject to restructuring (CEP, 2009). Only 19% of the restructuring schools in the states studied made AYP. Some schools remained in restructuring status for many years.

The Advent of Turnaround Literature and Programs

In 2004, under the leadership of then Governor Mark Warner, the Virginia Department of Education (VA DOE) began to develop a school turnaround specialist program. The VA DOE sponsored the two-year program through which districts with low-performing schools sent principals and district central office staff members to the University of Virginia (UVA) in Charlottesville to obtain executive education and related skills to assist them in turning around low-performing schools. Across the first two cohorts of participants, the majority of the schools demonstrated notable gains leading to expansion of the program outside of Virginia (Rhim, 2013). Thus was born the UVA Darden/Curry Partnership for

Leaders in Education (PLE) program that has led turnaround leadership initiatives across the country.

In 2007, the Academic Development Institute's Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) published a synthesis of research across sectors identifying key leader actions in successful turnaround efforts and made recommendations for districts embarking upon focused turnaround efforts. Also in 2007, Mass Insight published *The Turnaround Challenge* (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash), a call-to-action report that highlighted the need for intervention in America's lowest-performing schools. The report outlined structures within states and districts to focus on school turnaround and advocated the engagement of lead partners (external service providers) to bring special expertise to the work.

In 2008, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) released a practice guide, prepared by an expert panel, titled *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* (Herman et al.). The report stated that no well-designed, control studies were available and based its conclusions on case studies. From these case studies and the analysis by the panel, the report suggested four interrelated turnaround practices:

- Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership
- Maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction
- Make visible improvements early in the turnaround process (quick wins)
- Build a committed staff

In the wake of the IES report, other studies emerged, including cross-sector studies that looked at turnaround in the business sector and public (government) sectors other than education. CII, for example, published six reports from 2007 to 2009, covering evidence of turnarounds, turnaround leader actions, performance-based dismissals, school closure, and the district's role in rapid improvement. In 2010, CII published the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* (Perlman & Redding; revised in 2011) to provide guidance for states and districts in utilizing the new federal grant initiative.

School Improvement Grants

In the spring of 2009, Arne Duncan, the new Secretary of Education, announced his intention to focus on the lowest achieving 5% of schools, with new guidelines and funding through Title I's School Improvement Grant program. The program was also revised to include more high schools than had previously been eligible for School Improvement Grants, aimed at reversing low graduation rates as well as poor test performance. Half of the dropouts from American high schools come from just 15% of its high schools (i.e., the "dropout factories"; Balfanz & Legters, 2004). In the fall of 2009, the revamped SIG program was unveiled, and the "other" option in ESEA's restructuring menu was strengthened as a "transformation" intervention with the replacement of the principal and significant re-design of instruction and other high-leverage areas

of school practice. Under SIG, eligible districts competed for large grants fueled by $3.5 billion in initial funding, an amount that grew to $5 billion over the next few years. In addition to the transformation model, districts could adopt a turnaround model (replacement of at least half of the current personnel), restart as a charter school, restart as a school governed by an EMO, or close the school.

The first cohort of more than 1,300 schools began implementing their SIG grants in 2010. Of that group, 45% were high schools. Seventy-four percent of all the SIG schools chose the transformation model; 20% chose the turnaround model; 5% chose the restart model; and 1% chose school closure. Seventy-eight percent of the students in these schools received free or reduced lunch, a measure of poverty. Forty-four percent of the students were African-American and 33% were Hispanic.

A study of the 82 California SIG schools in cohort 1 (Dee, 2012) found after a year of implementation the schools had closed 23% of their achievement gap (gap between the school's performance and the state's performance target). Most of the gains were attributed to the schools that chose the turnaround model.

> In an April 2012 press release, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said:
> A new and important study of school turnarounds by University of Virginia economist Thomas Dee provides the first rigorous evidence that the Department's revamped School Improvement Grant (SIG) program is having a substantial impact on student achievement in struggling schools in California in just the first year of the program. . . . Educators and school leaders cannot give up on making far-reaching improvements in student learning in our lowest-performing schools. Children only get one shot at a good education. And Dee's new study reminds us that poverty is not destiny.

Between 2010 and 2013, states launched additional cohorts of SIG schools and planned to sustain the efforts with declining grant awards. States and districts began internal restructuring to make turnaround an area of emphasis.

U.S. Department of Education Turnaround Principles

Late in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education released guidelines for states to submit "flexibility requests" to amend their ESEA programs. The guidelines included the following set of Turnaround Principles, applicable especially to all schools in the bottom 5% in performance (standards-based assessments and graduation rates) but also useful for other schools in need of rapid improvement.

- **Leadership.** Providing strong leadership by reviewing the performance of the current principal, replacing the current principal, or ensuring the principal is a change leader and providing the principal with operational flexibility;
- **Effective Teachers.** Ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by reviewing all staff and retaining those determined to be effective, carefully selecting new teachers including transfers, and

providing job-embedded professional development informed by teacher evaluations;
- **Extended Learning Time.** Redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;
- **Strong Instruction.** Strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards;
- **Use of Data.** Using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including providing time for collaboration on the use of data;
- **School Culture.** Establishing a school environment that improves safety and discipline and addresses students' social, emotional, and physical health needs; and
- **Family and Community Engagement.** Providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Flexibility Waivers

As Congress struggled to reauthorize NCLB, and states faced the dooming reality that most of their schools would be deemed "failing" under existing NLCB accountability standards, the USED sought to create opportunities for states to revise their accountability structures in a manner that sustained accountability while acknowledging some of the practical challenges inherent to NCLB's goal for all students to be proficient by 2014. In 2011, President Obama announced that states could apply for waivers for specific aspects of NLCB if they developed appropriate means to hold schools and districts accountable for robust academic standards, including specific strategies to turn around the lowest performing schools (i.e., priority schools). To date 43 states have successfully applied for and been granted waivers. While shifting the structure of accountability systems developed under NCLB, the waiver provisions require all states to continue to devote significant resources to developing systems to support and sustain effective turnaround efforts.

Center on School Turnaround

In reorienting the national system of content centers in 2012, the U.S. Department of Education created a Center on School Turnaround and awarded a five-year grant and cooperative agreement to WestEd to administer the new center. WestEd's partners in the center are the Academic Development Institute, the University of Virginia's Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education, the National Implementation Research Network, Public Impact, the National Center on Time and Learning, and Education Northwest.

The CST's objectives are aligned with each of the following four roles the SEAs play relative to school turnaround:

1. **Advocating and Leading to Build Support for Local Turnaround Efforts**

To ensure the success of turnaround efforts across their respective states, SEAs need to cultivate buy-in for reforms, continuously advocate for tough changes, and communicate early and often to a wide range of stakeholders.

2. **Creating a Pro-Turnaround Statutory and Regulatory Environment**

To support districts as they work to turn around struggling schools, SEAs need to review policies, procedures, and regulatory structures to identify those that limit the flexibility of schools to take the dramatic action necessary to turn around chronically low performers.

3. **Administering and Managing Turnaround Efforts Effectively**

To ensure successful administration and management support to schools and districts, SEAs need designed applications that encourage thoughtful exploration of alternative approaches, administrative procedures that award grants in a timely manner, clear expectations for progress leading to grant renewal, and minimally intrusive compliance monitoring.

4. **Providing Targeted and Timely Technical Assistance to LEAs and Schools**

To provide effective technical assistance, SEAs need to access, leverage, and repurpose technical assistance resources on topics that are critical to turnaround success; SEAs also need to institute a statewide system of support and technical assistance through which they can effectively share these resources.

Conclusion

The SIG program, unlike previous efforts at elevating the performance trajectory of low-achieving schools, targets the very lowest performing schools, includes a large proportion of high schools, requires high-leverage interventions, and provides substantial amounts of funding. The SIG program and provisions of state ESEA flexibility waivers related to priority schools engage each level of the education system, from a Turnaround Office in the U.S. Department of Education, to similar structures in state education agencies, to a strong district role, and finally to the school. SIGs also enlist the expertise of external partners, organizations with experience and track records with significant school improvement. The SIG program is being closely monitored and evaluated at each level. The evaluative research that emerges from the SIG program may prove to be its greatest contribution to the renewal of American education.

References

Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. (2004). Locating the dropout crisis: Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts? In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis* (pp. 57–84). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Borman, G., Hughes, G., Overman, L., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 73*, 125–230.

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The turnaround challenge*. Boston, MA: Mass Insight.

Center on Education Policy. (2009). *A call to restructure restructuring*. Washington, DC: Author.

Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center. (2006). *Report on elementary school comprehensive school reform models*. Washington, DC: Author.

Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center. (2006). *Report on middle and high school comprehensive school reform models*. Washington, DC: Author.

Dee, T. (2012, April). *School turnarounds: Evidence from the 2009 stimulus.* Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Edmonds, R. (1979, October). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership, 37*(1), 15–24.

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). *American educational history: School, society, and the common good*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Education Goals Panel. (1995). *The national education goals report: Building a nation of learners.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

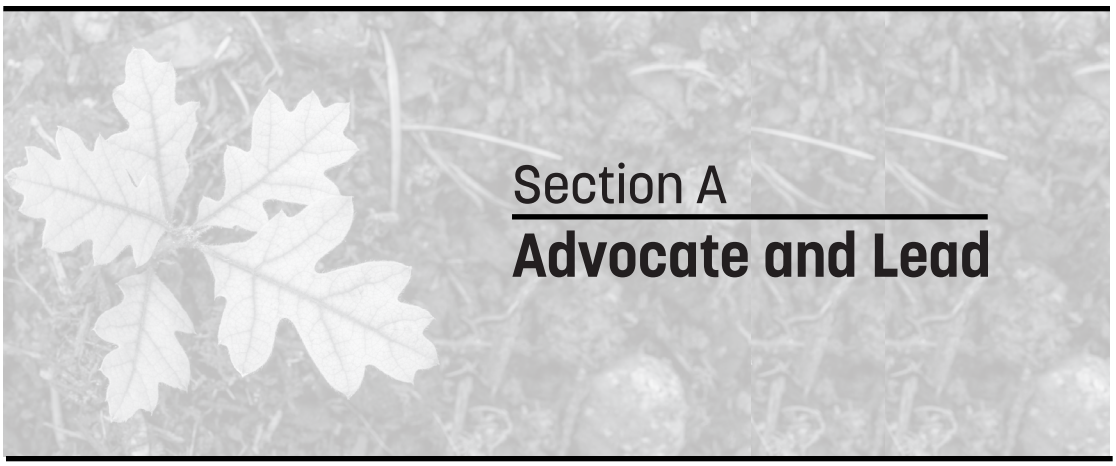
Perlman, C. L., & Redding, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook on effective implementation of school improvement grants*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute, Center on Innovation & Improvement.

Ravitch, D. (2000). *Left behind: A century of failed school reform*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Redding, S. (2007). An evolution in American education. In S. Redding & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Handbook on statewide systems of support* (pp. 57–76). Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute, Center on Innovation & Improvement.

Rhim, L. M. (2013). *State-initiated school turnaround strategies: Leveraging the state education agency to drive meaningful change*. Charlottesville, VA; Sacramento, CA; Lincoln, IL: University of Virginia's Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education; Center on School Turnaround; Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://centeronschoolturnaround.org/new-monograph-state-initiated-school-turnaround-strategies-leveraging-the-state-education-agency-to-drive-meaningful-change-rhim/

U.S. Department of Education. (2011, September 23). *ESEA flexibility*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/documents/esea-flexibility.doc



Section A

Advocate and Lead

Leveraging the Bully Pulpit: Optimizing the Role of the Chief State School Officer to Drive, Support, and Sustain School Turnaround

Lauren Morando Rhim and Sam Redding

> *The bully pulpit can set the agenda, express national goals, and frame education issues, proving at times to be a powerful force for reform. Presidential pronouncements and commissions have elevated issues of equity and student achievement, shifting political lines and sending school systems onto a new course. Examples of such agenda-setting include the release of A Nation at Risk in 1983, which alerted the country to the poor performance of American schools; the NCLB-era emphasis on testing and accountability; and the Obama administration's advocacy for school turnarounds, charter schooling, and teacher evaluation. Federal policies and rhetoric can provide cover for leaders at the state and local levels to enact controversial policies, making it easier for them to pursue goals that would otherwise foster fierce backlash. As Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, summarizes, "Washington is often at its best when a president is using the bully pulpit to highlight national educational and civil rights challenges and then tying them to our shared goals." (Hess & Kelly, 2013, p. 4)*

Introduction

Chief state school officers—typically referred to as Commissioners, Superintendents, or Secretaries of Education—are responsible for leading their respective states' public education systems. They work closely with their states' legislatures, state boards of education, and governors to lead their state education agencies (SEA). As the leaders of the system, they have the bully pulpits from which they can articulate and drive their agendas. When it comes to school

turnaround efforts, chiefs can use the position to catalyze, support, enable, and sustain school turnaround efforts. Given limited resources at their disposal, effectively optimizing their bully pulpits is a key tool in state chiefs' toolboxes. This chapter explores the role of the chief state school officer in today's education policy climate and draws lessons from chiefs who have attempted, not always successfully, to leverage the position as a platform to drive an agenda to turn around the lowest performing schools. The chapter also outlines key action principles chiefs should consider to optimize their position to support focused turnaround efforts.

Chief in Charge

Chief state school officers' authority, roles, and responsibilities vary across the country. Moreover, the selection process for a state chief influences the position's authority because the path is linked to the constituency that secures the position and the extent to which the chief is subject to political pressures. Nationwide, there are three paths to the chief's office (National Association of State Boards of Education [NASBE], 2013):

- State board appoints or recommends state chief (23 states)
- Governor appoints state chief (15 states)
- Residents of the state elect chief state school officer (12 states)

Appointed state chiefs avoid the divisiveness of a statewide election but may be subject to the whims of governors and state boards. Conversely, elected state chiefs may enjoy some degree of security stemming from public support of voters but are subject to the distraction that elections can present.

State chiefs play different roles in the broader state governance structure. In some states, the chief is a member of the governor's cabinet and leads the SEA (e.g., Tennessee). In other states, the governor appoints a cabinet-level secretary of education to function as policy executive and a commissioner of education to manage the SEA (e.g., Massachusetts). The limited research on state chiefs does not identify the optimal manner of appointment, parameters of authority, or governance structure (Brown, Hess, Lautzenheiser, & Owen, 2011).

Legislatures hypersensitive to directing funding to local districts and schools have historically relegated the SEA to the role of compliance monitor and provided notably limited resources relative to overall responsibilities. A recent analysis of eight state education budgets documented that SEA resources are spread very thin relative to overall K–12 public education expenditures. Furthermore, many of the resources allocated to the SEA are provided through federal categorical programs (e.g., Title I of ESEA, special education, school nutrition) and are therefore highly regulated (Murphy & Ouijdani, 2011).

Regardless of the manner in which state chiefs obtain the position, how states configure the state chief's role, or the resources over which they have control, they have the potential to leverage their authority to significantly influence the

direction of public education in their states (Brown et al., 2011). An in-depth case study of the implementation of standards-based reform in two states in the 1990s found that "implementation of complex school reform seems to require a more activist definition of the Commissioner's and the department's role" (Lusi, 1997, p. 158). Chief state school officers and staff members more directly charged with driving the SEA's turnaround agenda have the opportunity to catalyze turnaround efforts by developing an intentional activist strategy to leverage the chief's bully pulpit. Of particular value for school turnaround efforts, they can bring attention to the need for dramatic change and cultivate critical buy-in to make the difficult changes required for organizational turnaround (Rhim, 2013). In addition, they can demonstrate their commitment by developing relevant policy and directing resources to support turnaround. The extent to which chiefs fully leverage their authority differs by state and the individual occupying the pulpit (Brown et al., 2011).

Relationship With the State Board of Education

The state chief is the professional charged with leading SEA. The state board fulfills state constitutional responsibilities related to providing citizens with access to public education (NASBE, 2011). Similar to the state chief, the state board members are either elected or appointed. They are responsible for advocating for education, serving as a liaison between citizens and education policy makers, building consensus, and developing policy. In practice, these responsibilities translate to actions such as establishing 1) curriculum standards, 2) graduation requirements, 3) professional credentialing requirements, 4) statewide testing programs, and 5) district accreditation standards. They are also responsible for appropriately implementing federal statutes (NASBE, 2011). Ideally, the state board and state chief work in concert with their state legislature to adopt policies and allocate resources to support agreed upon priorities.

In line with their larger responsibilities, state boards can also play a substantive role in establishing goals and supporting the state chiefs in their efforts to drive, support, and sustain school turnaround. By way of example, the Utah Board of Education outlined the problem facing public education in the state in the following simple but powerful terms and developed a strategic plan that outlined specific quantifiable goals:

> As of 2012, only 43% of Utah adults had a postsecondary certificate or degree. On average, only 58.5% of Utah high school graduates enroll in college….By 2020, increase percentage of Utah high school graduates who have a postsecondary certificate or degree to 66% and increase percentage of students proficient in reading and math in the third, sixth, and eight grades to 90%. (Utah State Board of Education, 2013, p. 2)

Clear acknowledgement of the challenges, articulation of the pressing need for change, and identification of explicit goals provide a simple and specific focus

for educators working across the state. Furthermore, the message communicates what the board and presumably the state chief see as priorities.

While setting goals is the essential first step to driving any agenda, it is arguably the easy part. Once state boards identify goals, they charge state chiefs with developing and implementing policies and funding programs to achieve the goals.

In considering the value of and strategies to leverage the role of the chief, it is relevant to acknowledge that state boards and chief state school officers operate in a political environment with diverse constituencies advocating their particular agendas (Ujifusa, 2012). For instance, decisions to prioritize the lowest performing schools, including allocation of additional resources to these districts and their respective schools, can trigger an outcry from constituencies in higher performing districts. In light of this political reality, efforts to advocate for school turnaround must be embedded in broader efforts to ensure that all students have access to quality public schools; neither state boards of education nor chief state school officers can overlook the majority of schools in the process of prioritizing schools identified for turnaround (i.e., the lowest 5% according to performance on state standardized assessments). They must juggle a dynamic portfolio of districts and their schools in a manner that provides incentives for successful schools while simultaneously providing supports for struggling districts (Redding & Walberg, 2007). To accomplish these ambitious goals, the state chief must engage constituents, including the state board, and solidify relationships in order to build political capital essential to driving ambitious change agendas (Brown et al., 2011).

Leveraging the Bully Pulpit

> *Heightened attention to issues such as turning around low-performing schools, fixing state data systems, and improving teacher evaluations all require state education officials to play a new and far more demanding role, often under the scrutiny of the media spotlight. (Brown et al., 2011, p. 1)*

In a seminal book on federal policy development and implementation, Kingdon (1984) refers to "policy entrepreneurs" as the individuals who are willing to advocate for high priority proposals and demonstrate a willingness to use political influence to advance their agendas (p. 191). Effective policy entrepreneurs are individuals with education, resources, and connections—all key attributes of individuals who serve as chief state school officers. Examples of resources policy entrepreneurs expend are time, energy, reputation, and money. State chiefs committed to turning around the lowest performing schools should consider themselves entrepreneurs charged with identifying practical and sustainable solutions (i.e., solutions that build long-term capacity) to vexing problems. Reflecting the complexities inherent in public schools that are largely

governed by local school boards resistant to centralized efforts to drive change, effectively leveraging their bully pulpits to drive their agendas can increase state chiefs' probability of influencing local practices (Malen & Muncey, 2000).

Redding (2012) charges the state chief and the chief's leadership team with the central role in initiating change and innovation in the SEA and through the districts and schools:

> Because of the strictures placed upon them by federal and state statutes, mandates, and regulations, SEAs may adopt reactive postures. The divergent interests and legitimate authorities of local districts further complicate SEA action. For SEAs to meet their gargantuan challenges in a shifting landscape, however, a proactive tack is required. SEAs must be able to innovate—to change in constructive ways. To fulfill their purposes within the limits of their resources, they need sound management practices, including processes for implementing innovation. To harness the talents and ingenuity of all their personnel, they must inspire individual striving and collective endeavor. SEAs need change leadership. (p. 9)

Change is not a comfortable or easy process for any organization, and the state chief must effectively manage the SEA, protect it from ill-conceived and unproductive initiatives, and identify and enact necessary changes consistent with the SEA's mission and goals.

By way of example, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan embarked upon a "Back to School Bus Tour" in the fall of 2013 to articulate his priorities. The tour entailed visiting cities across the country and giving speeches at schools. During a stop in Albuquerque, Secretary Duncan articulated his agenda as follows:

> We have a set of folks, myself and the President included, who think education is an investment. It's the best investment we can make….But every time I go testify over at Congress, there is a set of folks who are telling me education is an expense, and we should be cutting back….Are we going to educate our way to a better economy, or are we going to cut back….We need pressure across the political spectrum on political leaders to invest in education. (Montaya Bryan, 2013).

This speech is notable not just for its content and clear indication that the speaker has the full support of the President, but also for the fact that Secretary Duncan did not issue a press release from Washington, DC. Rather, he physically travelled to a variety of smaller cities to articulate his agenda directly to constituents. Direct communication has both symbolic as well as substantive value as it indicates that the topic is important enough for the speaker to devote time to travel to advocate directly for his agenda.

Tracking articles written by and about state chiefs provides other examples of their efforts to leverage their bully pulpits to advance their agendas. In Oklahoma, in a press release distributed to correspond with the release of state assessment data, State Superintendent Janet Burresi acknowledged gains

and pressed for district and school personnel to remain focused: "So, while I'm pleased with the progress we've made, I'm not satisfied. We simply must have more of our students prepared for the rigors of college, workforce training, and career by the time they graduate high school" (2013, para. 7). In this statement, Burresi celebrates success but emphasizes her high expectations and the ongoing need to stay focused on better outcomes for students.

In light of competing demands, chiefs committed to school turnaround need to be strategic and intentional about how they direct their authority to drive, support, and sustain effective turnaround. To optimize their bully pulpits, they can 1) communicate a sense of urgency and commitment, 2) advocate for policies that facilitate turnaround, and 3) reinforce their agendas by allocating resources in line with priorities. The following sections describe these three actions and provide examples of state chiefs using these levers.

Communicate a Sense of Urgency and Commitment

Rapid and dramatic change is a central component of school turnaround; schools identified for turnaround require dramatic change that will benefit the students *currently* in the school, not just students due to enroll in three to five years. Consequently, communicating a sense of urgency for immediate action (i.e., change is not optional) is critical to successful school turnaround efforts (Public Impact, 2007). State chiefs can communicate a sense of urgency within their states to build buy-in and, to a broader external policy audience, advocate for programs that will support their turnaround goals. The following sections describe examples of internal and external communication strategies and describe the potential role for social media that is emerging as a key means state chiefs can use to communicate directly with constituents.

Internal Communication

Chief state school officers spend their days interacting with a host of constituents. These interactions provide chiefs opportunities to communicate their priorities. National surveys document that the public has a relatively limited understanding of key education policy issues.[1] Yet, voters elect local school board members as well as governors who have significant influence over education (e.g., they allocate resources and appoint state chiefs). State chiefs can use the position to inform their various constituencies of their priorities related to school turnaround given district and school performance levels and instill a sense of urgency for change. This may include speaking at statewide school

[1]See, for example, recent Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup (http://pdkintl.org/programs-resources/poll/), Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research (http://www.apnorc.org/PDFs/Parent%20Attitudes/AP_NORC_Parents%20Attitudes%20on%20the%20Quality%20of%20Education%20in%20the%20US_FINAL_2.pdf), and 2013 Education Next Poll (http://educationnext.org/the-2013-education-next-survey/) for data regarding awareness of Common Core, perceptions about the quality of public schools, and understanding of average cost per pupil.

board conferences in rural states or visiting districts with large numbers of schools identified for turnaround (Rhim & Redding, 2011). The engagements present opportunities to educate citizens about the performance of schools and the need for urgency and provide a context for decisions that will trigger resistance (e.g., implement robust teacher and school leader accountability systems).

In the mid-1990s, Richard Mills, the state chief of New York, effectively leveraged the bully pulpit to draw attention to a two-tiered diploma system wherein some students earned the rigorous Regents diploma while others received the Regents Competency Test diploma. Mills proposed that all students should be encouraged and expected to complete the requirements to obtain a Regents diploma, and this call catalyzed parents dissatisfied with the system to support his agenda for higher expectations for all students (Brown et al., 2011).

Written communication reinforces these priorities. For instance, in the introduction to the Rhode Island Department of Education's 2010–2015 strategic plan, Superintendent Deborah Gist stated:

> Our major goal, the primary objective that we are working toward, is to ensure that all Rhode Island students are ready for success in college, careers, and life. We propose that by 2015 at least 85% of all Rhode Island's students will graduate with a Regents diploma which will signify that they have demonstrated proficiency in their core academic subjects and that they are ready to succeed in postsecondary education and in a challenging career.
>
> I want to emphasize to all Rhode Islanders the sense of urgency we feel about the importance of our work. We have a strong foundation in place, and we are building upon it. We are not changing direction, but we are certainly getting more specific and ambitious about our goals. Over the next five years, we will direct all of our resources to focus squarely on these priorities. (2009, p. 2)

In this quotation about her school improvement agenda, Gist strives to instill a sense of urgency and communicates that she will prioritize or "direct all resources" to school improvement efforts. In addition to her formal communication strategies, Commissioner Gist has been creative about how she communicates her priorities in informal ways. For instance, she recently took a high profile skydive with a teacher to celebrate a school winning the state's summer reading challenge, generating headlines announcing, "Rhode Island Education Commissioner Deborah Gist Skydives for Literacy" (Klein, 2013).

A quotation from the state chief of New Mexico includes a clear signal that her goals align with the governor's goals and provides another example of communicating a sense of urgency related to school improvement:

> As the Governor has often said, education reform must be rooted in the belief that every student can learn and must be motivated by a willingness to target our investment in education on proven efforts to improve the achievement of our struggling schools and students. We have an incredibly long way to

> go when it comes to raising the reading skills of our third graders, and we should not be satisfied by modest gains. Our high school students are demonstrating how targeted reforms can yield results, so there should be no excuses for why we can't expand successful efforts to every student in every grade in New Mexico. (Logan, 2013, para. 5)

In this statement, Skandera acknowledges tangible challenges students face and then celebrates recent growth, thereby simultaneously communicating a sense of urgency and establishing evidence that change is possible.

An analysis of SEA approaches to implementing the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program documented that outreach by chief state school officers communicated an important symbolic as well as substantive message to districts with low-performing schools (Rhim & Redding, 2011). Of note, chief state school officers' visits to districts and phone calls in addition to written guidance regarding SIG reportedly communicated that school turnaround was a priority in the states. SEA personnel reported that support from their state superintendent reinforced their efforts to generate buy-in at the district level. For example, Deb Halliday, Policy Advisory to the State Superintendent of Montana, explained,

> Our superintendent hit the road to personally visit the schools and communities. We [communicated] high levels of support to get them to commit to the change. This involved our state level teachers' union going out on the road, which was pretty phenomenal. We went to very remote parts of Montana to talk to teams about the unique approach, and the union was a big part of this because of the impact SIG would have on collective bargaining agreements and the new teacher evaluation systems. (Rhim & Redding, 2012, p. 35)

Visits to districts embarking upon turnaround efforts can be a high leverage means to build momentum, especially if the visit reinforces that key leaders (e.g., both the state chief and the teacher association leadership) are committed to the agenda. For instance, when rolling out the SIG program in Idaho, the state chief visited districts identified as eligible for SIG funding to encourage them to complete SIG applications. SEA personnel reflected that the state chief used "a lot of political capital to talk to district superintendents about [SIG]." He told them, "We will do whatever we have to do to work with you." The state chief in Arkansas took a similar approach and was very involved with providing support to the seven eligible schools including visiting all of the schools and attending board meetings in each of the districts. In reflecting on the impact of the visits, Arkansas Department of Education personnel noted, "The commissioner's support at the board meetings really showed that this is a collaborative effort centered around improvement at all levels" (Rhim & Redding, 2011, p. 15).

When rolling out their SIG program, chief state school officers in Arizona and Utah participated in the related professional development alongside their districts and schools. SEA personnel from both states reported that their chiefs'

participation sent a strong message to the teams that the SIG training was important (Rhim & Redding, 2011).

In New Jersey, to build support for a new initiative to turn around low-performing schools, state chief Chris Cerf authored a passionate editorial in a regional newspaper and posted the article on the SEA's website. In the editorial, Cerf implores citizens to "work together over the next several years to give all students in New Jersey equal opportunities for success, and let's hope that the support of expert educators in our [Regional Achievement Centers] will help to turn around low-performing schools. But let's also be honest that our children are the most important resource we have and that we must be ready to do whatever we can to give them a fair shot"(Cerf, 2012, para. 12–13).

External Communication

Leveraging their position to advocate for school turnaround is not limited to internal communication. State chiefs can also use their bully pulpit to reach a national audience, an audience comprised of federal legislators, advocacy groups, and private philanthropists who can develop policies and programs and allocate resources to support local efforts. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has historically served as the primary national voice and source of professional development for state chiefs. As a membership organization with diverse members, CCSSO has played a critical role in supporting state chiefs, but it has not typically engaged in particularly controversial advocacy work. Separate from CCSSO, in 2010, a small group of state chiefs interested in advocating for a more aggressive national education reform agenda signed on to participate in a program created by Excellence for Education, Chiefs for Change (CFC), but also remained members and supportive of CCSSO's mission. CFC has articulated a "roadmap" to excellent education, including a commitment to "replace failure with success" which entails:

- providing intense interventions for chronically low-performing schools;
- requiring failing schools to show demonstrable and sustained improvement or face closure; and
- leveraging school and district funding and governance to turnaround low-performing schools and districts. (Chiefs for Change, 2013, p. 2)

In addition to forming coalitions to extend their voices beyond their state borders, state chiefs also testify on Capital Hill in an effort to influence Congress, including advocating for policies that support school turnaround. For example, in February of 2013, the chiefs from Kentucky and New York testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, urging Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (i.e., NLCB; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). By testifying, the chiefs not only had the potential to influence federal policy makers, they also communicated to citizens and employees of their respective SEAs their views about reauthorization

and demonstrated that it is a priority given the extent to which it influences state and local practice.

Leverage Social Media

Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, topical blogs) provides an efficient means to communicate directly with stakeholders absent filters or delays inherent to more traditional media (e.g., live news, newspaper articles). A recent survey found that 72% of all online adults are using social media (Pew Internet, 2013). A powerful example of the potency of social media to communicate information is the 2011 revolution in Egypt. Organizers used Facebook to create coalitions and Twitter to keep the public informed, both in Egypt and across the globe, of the evolving revolution against the Egyptian government in spite of focused efforts to limit communication. Commentators described the phenomenon as a "leaderless revolution fueled by social media that transcended national boundaries, religion, economic class, and helped overthrow a 30-year old repressive regime" (Kamal & Meenalochani, 2012, p. 343). In large part due to the impact of social media on events such as the revolution in Egypt and Occupy Wall Street in the U.S., the Foreign Services now requires all diplomats to receive training in social media (Kamal & Meenalochani, 2012).

Many state departments of education, and specifically the chief state school officer in the state, leverage social media to communicate directly to constituents regarding their priorities. For instance, New York's Commissioner John King maintains a Twitter account and has more than 5,000 followers. He uses the page to make announcements, publicize speaking engagements, and highlight school and student success stories. In Tennessee, Commissioner Kevin Huffman regularly tweets about performance data, school success, and his official activities. In Michigan, State Superintendent John Flanagan tweets information about school performance and regularly posts quotes reflecting his outlook and priorities.

Effectively utilizing social media requires some basic training; once posted, information becomes a part of the public record. Nevertheless, when used strategically, it has the potential to provide state chiefs with an efficient means to communicate their priorities and reinforce more formal communication methods.

Drive School Turnaround Policy Agenda

In addition to communicating a sense of urgency related to school turnaround, state chiefs can utilize their position to introduce and advocate for policies to foster effective and sustainable school turnaround efforts. State chiefs have used this authority to change policies that impede turnaround efforts and promote policies that foster and sustain turnaround.

Address Policies That Undermine School Turnaround Efforts

State education code typically reflects an evolution of thinking regarding public schools and regulations developed to ensure that local districts comply

with the code. However, the patchwork nature of policy making can lead to policies that trigger unintended consequences. For instance, as demonstrated by the debate about superintendent qualifications in Connecticut stemming from concerns about a district hiring a superintendent without required administrator credentials, certification requirements designed to address cronyism and nepotism can tie the hands of school boards interested in hiring nontraditional candidates (Strauss, 2013).

State chiefs can advocate to extend both the SEAs' and districts' flexibility to optimize talent management. For instance, SEAs frequently struggle to hire and retain qualified personnel; in most instances, professionals can earn more working at local districts than working for the state (Brown et al., 2011). However, the state chief has the opportunity to seek waivers or reconfigure positions to make them more attractive to highly skilled applicants and maximize the value of key personnel at the SEA. In Arizona, state chief Lisa Graham Keegan worked to change the status of SEA personnel to provide her with more discretion, and she successfully leveraged staff promotions to change the conditions of employment; each time an employee was offered a promotion, she negotiated greater flexibility in their contracts to ensure she could develop the staff she needed and hold them accountable for performance (Brown et al., 2011).

In August of 2013, New Mexico Governor Susan Martinez announced an initiative to award teachers an additional $5,000 a year to work in struggling schools or to help students earn Advanced Placement credits (Martinez, 2013). The initiative had practical implications in that it could increase the labor pool interested in low-performing schools. It also had symbolic value; it communicated that Governor Martinez was committed to improving a targeted group of schools, and she was willing to commit resources to support the work.

Streamline Planning, Reporting, and Compliance

New initiatives can overburden schools with additional reporting requirements and monitoring. To minimize the adverse impact of cumbersome reporting, state chiefs can solicit input from districts engaged in turnaround to identify reporting redundancies that the state chief can then prioritize to streamline. For instance, one of the specific goals articulated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) when it created its Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy was to streamline the monitoring and reporting by schools in high poverty areas in order to protect teacher and administrator time (Rhim, 2013). This goal emerged from state SEA personnel observing that schools identified for low performance by federal and state accountability systems devoted onerous quantities of time to hosting officials for compliance visits and completing multiple reports, and said, "one of the challenges that we have been working hard to overcome is redundancy of reports" (Rhim, 2013, p. 7). To address redundancies, TEA officials examined how many times they visited campuses and how they might limit

causing disruptions. Steps TEA took to limit these included coordinating the various teams that "touch the campus."

Streamlining planning, reporting, and monitoring while preserving accountability for dramatic change efforts was a recurring theme in eight states involved with the University of Virginia's School Turnaround Specialist Program (Rhim, 2013). Time is a precious commodity for schools embarking upon turnaround efforts. A notable benefit of having the SEA, and specifically the state chief, actively engaged in school turnaround efforts is its ability to see the entire state system and take steps to streamline existing requirements, allowing district and school personnel to devote more time to activities more directly involved with improving student outcomes (e.g., instructional coaching, structuring interventions, analyzing data). In Montana, state chief Denise Juneau prioritized flexibility and shifted her department from a one-size-fits-all approach to extending autonomy to districts that were performing well and simultaneously monitoring and supporting districts that were struggling (Ujifusa, 2012).

Create and Activate Consequences for Failure to Change

Successful turnaround efforts require multiple layers and stages of accountability, with multiple stakeholders fulfilling their respective responsibilities. Every stage is dependent upon effective tracking of outcomes to verify successful implementation and progress.

In SEA-initiated efforts, accountability begins with the chief state school officer and ends with the building principal. Chief executives must use their bully pulpits to garner support for investments in turnaround, ensuring states allocate adequate financial and human resources to support the initiative and establish systems that create the conditions for the initiatives to succeed (e.g., streamlined reporting and monitoring).

In Colorado, former state chief Dwight Jones took the atypical step of requiring districts to demonstrate effectiveness in order to access Title I funds, a federal entitlement program with few tangible consequences for ineffectiveness (Brown et al., 2012). The result of these requirements was greater adoption of interim assessments to track student growth.

In 1998, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in Louisiana created the School and District Accountability System that outlined specific academic performance goals and companion sanctions for districts that failed to meet these goals (Smith, 2012). In 2003, the legislature added additional teeth to the accountability system when it authorized the creation of a "Recovery School District" (RSD) authorized to take over persistently low-performing schools. Modeled after U.S. bankruptcy law, the state authorized the RSD to cancel existing contracts in schools eligible for takeover (i.e., schools that had failed to meet performance standards for four consecutive years and were located within a district in which 50% of its schools were failing; Nelson, 2012). Because of these

laws, the RSD currently operates dozens of schools in Louisiana. The threat of these actions and a state actually taking the actions when appropriate apply pressure for change and can instill a sense of urgency.

Allocate Resources in Line With Priorities

Money talks, and allocating substantive resources to support turnaround efforts communicates that this work is worth prioritizing. This allocation reinforces state chiefs' turnaround agendas. An intentional SEA strategy and structure developed to support district turnaround efforts and communicated effectively by the state chief signals that turnaround is a priority. This messaging has substantive as well as symbolic value, and it reinforces other communication related to the importance of addressing low performance. State chiefs have aligned resources to support their priorities by developing structures to support school turnaround and evaluating turnaround efforts in order to cull emerging best practices.

Develop a Structure to Support School Turnaround

States have developed a variety of structures to support turnaround from basic compliance with requirements related to statewide systems of support outlined in NCLB to standalone turnaround divisions charged with operating schools identified as candidates for dramatic change (Bakers, Hupfeld, Teske, & Hill, 2013; Mass Insight Education, 2010). For instance, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Michigan created recovery school districts—separate entities focused on creating conditions to support aggressive turnaround in schools that have long resisted more incremental change efforts. Indiana created turnaround academies and identified lead partners to play a central role in turnaround. Connecticut's state chief created a Commissioner's Turnaround Network to engage external providers to lead turnaround efforts, and Delaware created a Partnership Zone comprised of the lowest performing schools receiving targeted interventions and monitoring (Baker et al., 2013). It is premature to assess the merits of each of these structures, and the results will most likely be variable reflecting a variety of local contextual factors. Nevertheless, they are examples of strategies state chiefs can pursue to prioritize school turnaround efforts.

Evaluate and Refine State Support Structures

As states shift resources to support district efforts to turn around low-performing schools, effective evaluation of those efforts is critical to documenting emerging promising practices as well as halting ineffective practices. By investing in systems to track and evaluate the state's efforts, the chief affirms that effective turnaround is a priority and reinforces the importance of robust evaluation. Conversely, absence of effective evaluation systems communicates that change is optional.

The state of Massachusetts commissioned in-depth analyses of SIG schools in 2012 and 2013.[2] After conducting monitoring site visits to collect qualitative data, the state examined the practices of schools that had demonstrated the largest gains relative to those that had demonstrated the least gains. This process revealed specific differentiating practices, which the state used to inform future guidance to schools embarking upon turnaround (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). In a memorandum to the state board of education, state chief Mitchell Chester highlighted the key findings (i.e., turnaround schools demonstrating large jumps in performance have an "instruction- and results-oriented principal who has galvanized both individual and collective responsibilities", Chester, 2012, para. 6) and signaled how the data were used to improve practices (i.e., findings were used to alter the focus of targeted assistance to districts; Chester, 2012). The investment in the evaluation of school and district turnaround procedures informed state practice while also reinforcing that turnaround is a priority for the state chief.

Conclusion

As the leaders of their respective SEAs, chief state school officers have the potential to exert significant influence over school turnaround efforts in their states as well as across the nation. While state chiefs must negotiate mandates and regulations from the federal government along with their legislatures and state school boards and navigate a plethora of local politics, they have a distinct perspective that provides many opportunities to influence the quality of public education in every school in their states.

Introducing policies designed to turnaround schools requires upsetting the status quo and securing buy-in from stakeholders who do not necessarily share common goals or agree upon the means to achieve the goals. Consequently, one of the outcomes of chiefs advocating for disruptive change can be loss of support that limits their ability to fulfill their goals or leads to them losing their jobs. For instance, Idaho state chief Tom Luna's efforts to enact dramatic changes in how public schools operate, including efforts focusing on school turnaround, led to a successful voter referendum to roll back his reforms (Popkey, 2012). In 2012, Indiana Superintendent Tony Bennett lost his bid to continue as state chief due to resistance to his policies, including his policies related to school turnaround efforts (Campbell, 2012).

The extent to which state chiefs opt to fully leverage their bully pulpits varies and may be partially attributed to the state political context in which they operate. It is also a reflection of the extent to which state chiefs are willing to take political risks to accomplish their goals. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the political context, all state chiefs have the potential to utilize their bully pulpits

[2]To view the 2012 report, see http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2012-04/item2.html

to drive, support, and sustain effective turnaround efforts that can lead to better opportunities for students.

Action Principles

Communicate urgency for turnaround

- Drive bold turnaround efforts by communicating a sense of urgency from the bully pulpit. State chiefs have the opportunity to communicate internally to key constituents regarding the need for turnaround and externally to advocate for policies and funding streams that support turnaround efforts.
- Optimize social media to communicate directly with diverse constituency groups.

Drive state turnaround policy agenda

- Propose policies that foster school turnaround (e.g., develop programmatic and financial incentives to encourage actions that drive school turnaround; allocate resources to build district capacity for school turnaround).
- Change policies that hinder meaningful and sustainable change (e.g., rigid certification requirements that limit local hiring decisions, ineffective accountability systems).
- Address regulatory and procedural redundancies that can distract district and school leaders from turnaround work.

Hold districts accountable for turnaround results

- Articulate robust and transparent performance metrics and focus on student outcomes rather than compliance.
- Implement tangible consequences for failure and hold districts accountable on an ambitious timeline (e.g., demonstrate clear measures of behavior change and academic gains within first year).

Develop a structure to support school turnaround

- An intentional SEA strategy and structure developed to support district turnaround efforts and communicated effectively by the state chief signals that turnaround is a priority. This messaging has substantive as well as symbolic value, and it reinforces other communication related to the importance of addressing low performance.

Evaluate and refine state support structures

- As states shift resources to support district efforts to turnaround low-performing schools, effective evaluation of these efforts is critical. By investing in systems to track and evaluate the state's efforts, the chief affirms that effective turnaround is a priority and reinforces the importance of robust evaluation. Conversely, absence of effective evaluation systems communicates that change is optional.

References

Baker, R., Hupfeld, K., & Teske, P. (2013, February). *Turnarounds in Colorado: Partnership for innovative reform in a local control state*. Denver, CO: Buechner Institute for Governance.

Brown, C. G., Hess, F. M., Lautzenheiser, D. K., & Owen, I. (2011). *State education agencies as agents of change: What it will take for the states to step up on education reform*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Brenner, J. (2013, August 5). *Pew internet: Social networking.* Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/March/Pew-Internet-Social-Networking-full-detail.aspx

Burresi, J. (2013, August 26). *Pleased but not satisfied. From the Superintendent's desk*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma State Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www.ok.gov/sde/newsblog/2013-08-26/pleased-not-satisfied

Campbell, A. (2013, November 7). Indiana election 2012. Tony Bennett loses re-election bid as school superintendent to challenger Glenda Ritz. *Indianapolis Star*. Retrieved from http://www.indystar.com/article/20121106/NEWS0502/311060012/

Center for American Progress, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, & Hess, F. M. (2009). *Leaders and laggards: A state-by-state report card on educational innovation*. Washington, DC: Authors.

Cerf, C. (2012). *More must be done for failing schools*. Newark, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www.state.nj.us/education/news/2012/0605oped.htm

Chester, D. M. (2012, April 13). *Memorandum to members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education*. Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2012-04/item2.html

Chiefs for Change. (2013). *A roadmap for excellent education.* Tallahassee, FL: Foundation for Excellence in Education. Retrieved from http://chiefsforchange.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/chiefs-mission-narrative-and-principles.pdf

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2013, February). *Chiefs from KY and NY call on congress to reauthorize ESEA in testimony before U.S. senate*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://ccsso.org/News_and_Events/Current_News/Chiefs_from_KY_and_NY_Call_on_Congress_to_Reauthorize_ESEA_in_Testimony_before_US_Senate.html

Gist, D. (2009). *Transforming education in Rhode Island: Strategic plan 2010–2015*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Inside-RIDE/Additional-Information/RIDEStrategicPlan.pdf

Gross, B., & Jochim, A. (Eds.). (2013). Leveraging performance management to support school improvement. *The SEA of the Future, 1*(1). San Antonio, TX: Building State Capacity & Productivity Center at Edvance Research, Inc.

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http:// ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround_ pg_04181.pdf

Hess, F., & Kelly, A. (2013, January). What uncle Sam can (and cannot) do to improve K–12 schools: Lessons for the next four years. *Outlook.* Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute.

Kamal, M., & Meenalochani, P. (2012). Byte is mightier than the sword: Egypt revolution of 2011. *International Journal of Management and Information Systems, 16*(4), 341–344.

Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policy*. Boston, MA: Little Brown.

Klein, R. (2013, September 30). Rhode Island education commissioner Deborah Gist skydives for literacy. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/30/deborah-gist-skydives_n_4018012.html

Logan, L. (2013, July 15). Education reforms lead to significant gains among New Mexico minority students*.* Retrieved from http://excelined.org/2013/07/education-reforms-lead-to-significant-gains-among-new-mexico-minority-students/

Lusi, S. F. (1997). *The role of state departments of education in complex school reform*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Malen, B., & Muncey, D. (2000). Creating "a new set of givens"? The impact of state activism on school autonomy. In N. D. Theobald & B. Malen (Eds.), *Balancing local control and state responsibility for K–12 Education. 2000 Yearbook of the American Education Finance Association*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Martinez, S. (2013, August 28). *Governor Susana Martinez announced stipends for teachers moving to struggling schools or helping students earn Advanced Placement credits*. Albuquerque, NM: Office of the Governor.

Mass Insight Education. (2010, May). *Enabling school turnaround through state policy*. Boston, MA: Author.

Montoya Bryan, S. (2013, September 9). *Duncan kicks off back-to-school bus tour in NM*. The Associated Press.

Murphy, P., & Ouijdan, M. (2011, August). *State capacity for school improvement: A first look at agency resources*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.

National Association of State Boards of Education. (2011, March). *State boards: A critical link to quality education*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-03-Policy-Update-State-Boards-a-Critical-Link-to-Quality-Education.pdf

National Association of State Boards of Education. (2013, March). *State education governance models.* Retrieved from http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Governance-Models-Chart-March-2013.pdf.

Popkey, D. (2012, November 7). Laptop and online mandates lose in all 44 counties. *Idaho Statesman*. Retrieved from: http://www.idahostatesman.com/2012/11/07/2337158/laptop-and-online-mandates-lose.html

Public Impact. (2007). *School turnarounds: A review of the cross-sector evidence on dramatic organizational improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Redding, S. (2012). *Change leadership: Innovation in state education agencies*. Oakland, CA: Wing Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook on statewide systems of support*. Lincoln, IL and Charlotte, NC: Center on Innovation & Improvement and Information Age Publishing.

Rhim, L. M. (2013). *State-initiated school turnaround strategies: Leveraging the state education agency to drive meaningful change.* Lincoln, IL, Sacramento, CA, and Charlottesville, VA: Academic Development Institute, Center on School Turnaround, and Darden-Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education.

Rhim, L. M. (2011). *Learning how to dance in the Queen City: Cincinnati public schools' turnaround initiative.* Charlottesville, VA: Darden School Foundation. University of Virginia.

Rhim, L. M., & Redding, S. (2011). *Fulcrum of change: Leveraging 50 states to turn around 5,000 schools*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement.

Rhim, L. M., Hassel, B., & Redding, S. (2008). State role in supporting school improvement. In S. Redding & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Handbook on statewide systems of support* (pp. 21–56). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Smith, N. (2012, January). *The Louisiana recovery school district: Lessons for the buckeye state.* Washington, DC: Thomas Fordham Institute. Retrieved from http://edexcellencemedia.net/Ohio/FORINSLRSDReport.pdf

Ujifusa, A. (2012, October 9). State chiefs' races blend K–12 issues, state politics. *Education Week, 32*(7), 17 & 19. Retrieved from tp://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/10/10/07chiefs.h32.html?qs=chief+state+school+officers

Utah State Board of Education. (2013, June 18). *Common Core and the Utah education transformation plan: College, career, and citizenship ready.* Salt Lake City, UT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Common-Core/USBECommonCorePPT2013618.aspx

Welburn, B. L. (2011, March). *Why state boards of education are an essential part of our public education system.* Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education. Retrieved from http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-03-Commentary-Why-State-Boards.pdf

Engaging Local School Boards to Catalyze, Support, and Sustain School Turnaround

Lauren Morando Rhim

Engaging Local School Boards in School Turnaround Efforts

Local school boards are the embodiment of our long-standing commitment to local control; elected community representatives have the pulse of the community and ensure that public schools reflect an individual community's values and priorities. Overseeing high-quality schools that prepare students to succeed in the ever-evolving knowledge economy requires a relatively high level of collective sophistication. Local school boards must navigate federal and state policy to develop coherent local policy on a range of topics, including school turnaround. Yet, ongoing efforts to turn around failing schools focus primarily on the role of teachers, principals, and superintendents, as well as state and federal policy makers. Missing from this debate is a robust discussion or examination of the role of local school boards. Nevertheless, given their broad responsibilities, school boards can have a notable impact on turnaround efforts. In particular, school boards can make counterproductive decisions if they are not well versed on the need for turnaround or the changes required to dramatically improve a school's performance.

The challenge facing state policy leaders is figuring out how to leverage largely volunteer boards of lay citizens to develop effective policies and practices in a climate that frequently reduces their role to that of budget hawks or single-issue politicians. Efforts to optimize boards' contribution to turnaround efforts typically include training regarding board operations and education policy with a heavy focus on using achievement data to inform decisions. State education agencies (SEAs) are in a unique position to play a central role in providing or

enabling induction and training programs that include the board's role in school turnaround.

This chapter highlights findings from a report produced by the Academic Development Institute (ADI) regarding the role of local school boards in school accountability and transformation efforts (Rhim, 2013). The report synthesized the contemporary research regarding the role of local school boards in targeted improvement efforts and explored emerging practice through interviews with key practitioners in districts engaged in such efforts. Building on the research findings, this chapter outlines strategies SEAs can leverage to drive and support meaningful engagement of local school boards in focused school turnaround efforts.

Policy Context

Successfully initiating and sustaining meaningful improvements in the lowest performing public schools in the United States is a pressing challenge for policy leaders and practitioners nationwide. We simply cannot afford, morally or economically, to continue to undereducate generations of students (Alliance for Excellent Education, n.d.). Traditional reform initiatives designed to incrementally improve schools in three to five years are incongruous with the urgency driving federal and state policies focused on turning around the lowest performing schools—schools that have effectively failed to educate generations of students and are characterized as "drop-out factories" (Duncan, 2009). If we want to gain traction on scale that is sustainable, local school boards have to play an intentional and strategic role in school turnaround efforts, and SEAs can and should serve as catalysts in these efforts.

As outlined in state constitutions, school boards are agents of the state charged with fulfilling the state's obligation to provide resident students with a public education (Kirst, 2008). Within specific parameters dictated by state and federal laws, local school boards have the legal authority to craft the conditions for districts to operate successfully. Yet, historically they have focused mainly on what have been referred to as the "killer b's" (i.e., books, budgets, buildings, buses; Hess & Meeks, 2011). They have not historically focused on academic achievement. This division of labor has evolved from efforts to avoid micromanaging—schools boards set policy and manage budgets, and superintendents run districts—but this overlooks the critical link between policies, budgets, and school-level practices. Current efforts to transform schools and districts in a significant and sustainable way require meaningful engagement of local school boards beyond the "killer b's" to more strategic work focused on dramatically changing the performance of failing schools on a compressed timeline.

Key Responsibilities of Local School Boards

Regardless of district size, school boards are responsible for governing a multidimensional system and complying with federal and state regulations

attached to a variety of funding streams. District central offices typically employ a variety of specialized personnel charged with administering each district and the schools that operate within it. The exception to this is in small, often rural, districts in which administrators generally must wear a number of hats (e.g., curriculum and special education). In the last 50 years, school boards' responsibilities have morphed from administering basic operations to aligning federal, state, and local policies, crafting and shepherding complex budgets, and hiring and evaluating superintendents responsible for leading districts within a high-stakes accountability environment (Kirst, 2008; Land, 2002).

As synthesized by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), school boards' primary responsibilities are: establish vision, articulate standards, conduct assessments, implement accountability systems, align programs and resources, cultivate a climate for learning, foster collaboration and community engagement, and manage a continuous improvement process. However, if the role of the school board can be boiled down to a single critical action, it would be the hiring and supervising of the superintendent charged with meeting specific performance goals (Maeroff, 2011).

Correlation Between School Board Actions and Student Outcomes

To create the optimal conditions for student outcomes, local school boards must understand how their macro-level decisions impact principals, teachers, and students and then align resources accordingly (Gremberling, Smith, & Villani, 2000). The literature examining the correlation between school board behavior and student outcomes is limited and somewhat dated given the current policy context. Nevertheless, the seminal multiyear Lighthouse Inquiry Project conducted by the Iowa School Boards Foundation from 1998-2000 documented a correlation between student achievement and the actions and beliefs of board members that has potential relevance today (Delegardelle, 2008). The original study and subsequent follow-up projects demonstrated that particular school board actions and beliefs transfer to district personnel and lead to better student outcomes, even in high poverty districts. Specifically, the Lighthouse study found the following school board characteristics present in high performing, high poverty districts and missing in low performing, high poverty districts:

- Elevating as opposed to accepting belief systems (e.g., board members see schools as elevating students' potential as opposed to seeing students' potential as fixed);
- Understanding and focusing on school renewal (e.g., board members understand improvement initiatives); and
- Demonstrating awareness of actions in buildings and classrooms (e.g., board members are knowledgeable about schools and specific goals; Iowa Association of School Boards, 2000).

While school and district performance is influenced by multiple external factors, the Lighthouse Inquiry Project documented that school board members are positioned to make a difference. Given this correlation, SEAs cannot overlook the value of effectively building and leveraging board capacity in order to drive and sustain turnaround efforts.

Intentional goal setting and strategic planning are foundational to effective improvement efforts (National School Board Association, 2010; Rhim, 2013). Developing a coherent district mission and vision, along with a well-aligned strategic plan, can ensure that school board and district personnel have a clear understanding of priorities and a road map to achieve goals (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2000; Walser, 2009). When turning around low-performing schools, this clarity and alignment can ensure that specific schools are prioritized when it comes to extending operational flexibility, targeting hiring, and distributing resources (e.g., willingness to extend the turnaround principal autonomy, increase the amount of time district administrators devote to visiting the school and supporting the principal).

A growing body of literature pertaining to effective school turnaround stresses the importance of school districts, as opposed to just individual schools, in achieving sustainable turnaround at scale (Education Resource Strategies, 2011). Districts, starting with their school boards and superintendents, need to set agendas and thereafter allocate resources and develop policies to support these agendas, including prioritizing schools identified for turnaround (Brinson, Kowal, & Hassel, 2007; Public Impact, 2008).

State Role in Optimizing School Boards in School Turnaround

State education agencies have multiple tools they can leverage to encourage and support local school boards' efforts related to turnaround. Building on the existing research on school boards and emerging turnaround efforts, three tools have particular promise: 1) prioritize and promote the role of school boards, 2) incentivize school board member training, and 3) develop meaningful accountability policies and systems. These three levers are explored in the following sections.

Prioritize Role of School Boards

State education agencies issue policies and promulgate regulations related to planning and implementing school turnaround initiatives. SEAs can prioritize the role of school boards by elevating their involvement from simply being signatories to active participants in planning; failure to engage school boards can undermine change efforts.

Newspaper reports and accounts from state officials working with districts to implement Race to the Top (RTTT) and School Improvement Grant (SIG) initiatives document that boards are often left out of planning and implementation. This exclusion can lead to school board members not understanding and

potentially resisting unpopular but necessary changes (e.g., removal of popular but ineffective school leaders, school closures; Rhim & Redding, 2011). For instance, in 2011, the Christina, Delaware school district embarked upon a turnaround effort in two local schools that entailed replacing a large number of teachers. While the school board had initially signed off on the turnaround efforts initiated under the state's Race to the Top grant, when the practical implications became public, the board reversed course and voted not to support the turnaround actions. The state intervened, threatening to withhold $11 million of federal funds, and the board eventually supported the staff replacements (Mussoni, 2011). This incident highlights the key role school boards can play in turnaround efforts. If the Christina school board had been more substantively engaged in the planning process, the district could have preempted the spectacle that arose when it came time to implement the school turnaround plan.

Develop Policies and Allocate Resources to Support School Board Member Training

To be effective managers overall, and specifically to initiate, support, and sustain targeted school turnaround efforts, local school board members require a clear understanding of their role in district governance and substantive knowledge about what changes are required to dramatically improve schools. Training provides school board members the opportunity to learn about their key roles and responsibilities, as well as more substantive content related to education policy and practice (Carr, 2012; Walser, 2009). Unfortunately, training in general is an area where boards are underinvesting both in terms of time and resources (Rhim, 2013). This is particularly problematic when a district is embarking upon an ambitious turnaround effort that will require the school board to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to change, even in the face of discord (e.g., complaints stemming from changing school norms and traditions to improve instruction). To support effective turnaround efforts, board members need to be aware of the strategies and human dynamics in the school and community that are likely to accompany a vigorous turnaround effort.

Of note, training board members about how to use data is a priority for the National School Board Association (NSBA, 2012) and affiliated state associations. These groups promote data use as the foundation of meaningful planning and to hold superintendents accountable (NSBA, 2011). Research on school turnaround has demonstrated that planning and accountability are critical to success (Public Impact, 2007, 2008; Rhim, 2011). States can support and encourage turnaround-specific training by developing policies incentivizing school board members to obtain training and allocating resources to create a robust turnaround training portfolio.

Develop Policies to Support School Board Member Training

Twenty-three states require school board members to obtain training with varying levels of prescription, rigor, and compliance (NSBA, 2010). The state of Maine, for instance, requires new board members to participate in a single, two-hour orientation about freedom of information laws, while Texas requires new board members to complete at least 16 hours of training, specifies the focus (e.g., initial district orientation, orientation to state education code, team building), and requires experienced board members to complete at least eight hours each year. In New York, newly elected members are required to complete six hours of training regarding fiscal oversight and governance skills. Of the states that require training, most allow both the state school board association as well as other approved external vendors to provide the training.

Requirements, however, only have meaning if the training is high quality, compliance is tracked, and there are consequences for noncompliance. Enforcement provisions range from states simply requiring that districts report information about training to the state and the local community to the authority to remove board members who have not obtained the required training (e.g., Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia). A NSBA (2010) survey regarding training requirements documented that it was extremely rare for the state commissioner or state board to actually exercise their authority related to the training requirement.

By way of example, following a school board scandal in Georgia, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that the state has the authority to withhold funding from districts in which board members failed to comply with training requirements, but the state had never exercised this option (Badertscherv & Salzer, 2010). Due to concern about local school board capacity and a resulting crisis (i.e., loss of district accreditation), in 2012 the Georgia legislature added language that now permits the state to bar members from running for reelection if they have not completed their required training. Designating compliance with the training requirement as a criterion for reelection presumably infuses a degree of accountability into the requirement. Individual board members' ability to devote adequate time to obtaining training is a practical challenge that is difficult to overcome; especially in the majority of districts in which board members are essentially volunteers (i.e., paid less than $1,000 a year for board service) and district budgets are perpetually tight. The SEA can help diminish this challenge by investing in developing high-quality opportunities that are readily accessible across the state, including distance-learning opportunities.

SEAs can also engage private philanthropies to support board training. For example, in Seattle, a local nonprofit associated with the district sponsors board retreats and training to build board members' capacity and improve board operations, management oversight, and support for student achievement (Institute

for a Competitive Workforce, 2012). In Texas, a group of philanthropies in partnership with the Center for Reform of School Systems offers an annual retreat for new board members. The Texas Education Agency also requires vendors interested in providing school board training to register with the state; the registration process requires vendors to meet specific standards to control for quality (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

Training Approaches

School board training approaches range from very structured and recurring training for boards and superintendents to relatively unstructured individual professional development (Rhim, 2013). For instance, Memphis participated in the Broad Foundation's Board Training offered by the Center for Reform of School Systems over the course of a year, and their chairperson credited the training with significantly improving board capacity. Board members in Alexandria, Virginia obtained board training through a national executive search firm. Building on findings from the Lighthouse Project documenting the correlation between effective school boards and student achievement, the state of Idaho provides ongoing intensive training to local school boards. The Lighthouse framework focuses on preparing board members to communicate a sense of urgency, focus on improvement, create conditions for district and school success, track progress, develop effective policies, and cultivate leaders (Delegardelle, 2008; Iowa Association of School Boards, 2007).

Taking a different approach, the state of Montana hired school board coaches for its three lowest-performing districts to build rural school board members' capacity. The coaches work directly with school boards and provide them with guidance related to running effective meetings and maintaining a productive relationships with their superintendents as well as on more technical issues such as using data to inform policy. After two years of implementation, Montana officials have seen a dramatic switch in board agendas and a rise in levels of board involvement—a switch that is seen as positive and is credited with helping schools make notable academic improvements. The coaches have facilitated a shift to a more intentional discussion of academics (Rhim & Redding, 2011). Reflecting on the potent impact of intentionally building school board capacity, one official from the Montana Office of Public Instruction noted, "I have seen a huge switch from boards just talking about sports to talking about academics and following policies and procedures. They see that they set the tone for everything." A second official explained, "We had been hearing for years and years that the board is the decision-maker, and they need to set the right tone. We heard cries from across the state that they, the boards, were the biggest problem, but also could be the heart of the solution" (Rhim & Redding, 2013).

Training is generally funded at the local level, although some states fund their training through a combination of state and local funds. Allocating adequate time

and resources is a persistent challenge for school boards. Specialized training can be cost-prohibitive and, consequently, limited to large districts with correspondingly large budgets. Board member turnover can also be a challenge; it can be hard to justify the return on investment in training when board members cycle out of office every few years. Nevertheless, SEA investments in training are potentially a high leverage tool as it can build capacity that can pay dividends, especially in districts where limited board capacity has contributed to superintendent churn and operational dysfunction.

Establish Meaningful Accountability Mechanisms

Accountability to local constituents is a leading claim proffered regarding the merits of local school boards; local communities elect board members and therefore board members will be responsive and accountable to local communities. However, data regarding the extent to which board elections are generally contested—rarely—and low voter turnout raise questions regarding the validity of this accountability claim (Kowalski, 2002). In other words, the notion that local school board governance ensures a high level of accountability to local communities appears to be more façade than fact. Each year there are highly contested school board races (e.g., Los Angeles Unified School District in 2013). But, in general, the vast majority of school board members who wish to continue to volunteer significant quantities of time to govern local schools run unopposed and remain in office until they decide to leave (Kowalski, 2002; Samuels, 2011). Absent meaningful accountability for individual school board members, the SEA can develop policies to collectively hold school boards accountable.

Efforts to infuse accountability into pubic education include shifts from school board governance to mayoral control and a variety of school choice initiatives (e.g., charter schools and vouchers) that shift control to individual parents. The ultimate and most controversial manifestation of school board accountability is state statutes authorizing removal of locally elected boards or significant reconfiguration of their responsibilities under dire circumstances. Multiple cities have shifted from elected boards to mayoral control in an effort to improve district financial or operational health (e.g., Boston, Cleveland, New York, Washington, DC). Multiple states, (e.g., Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania) have passed legislation authorizing removal of elected boards and replacing them with appointed boards or emergency managers charged with turning around the district's fiscal operations. These efforts are generally highly controversial and, to date, have had mixed results (see, Hess, 2008; Rhee & Fenty, 2010; Wong & Shen, 2005).

A less explored option is state- or district-initiated school board evaluations. Initial guidance regarding the federal Race to the Top Districts grant competition included a requirement that districts conduct school board evaluations, but it lacked details regarding meaningful implementation. While dropped from the

final requirement, it spurred a preliminary discussion of the potential value and logistics of school board evaluations (e.g., National School Board Association, n.d.).

Potential strategies SEAs can explore to increase school board accountability include encouraging school boards to conduct rigorous self-evaluations, explicitly incorporating school board training and performance in existing state accountability systems (e.g., data dashboards, district report cards), and working with external entities to evaluate school boards. In instances of egregious behavior (e.g., inappropriate contracting, open meetings violations), SEAs can also take a proactive stance and pursue allegations of board member misbehavior that violates education codes and board ethics policies.

Based on years of school board dysfunction, in 2009 a local nonprofit in Pittsburgh initiated Board Watch. Local volunteers were trained to evaluate board members during meetings on five measures of good board governance: focus and mission, transparency, conduct, role clarity, and competency. Board Watch founder, Carey Harris, explained the program "is as much about holding the board accountable as it is about engaging the public" (Institute for a Competitive Workforce, 2012, p. 59). The organization releases report cards evaluating the board and making recommendations for improvement multiple times during the year (Maxwell, 2009).

The most significant challenge associated with regulatory attempts to introduce school board accountability measures is the previously mentioned conviction that locally elected school boards are a critical reflection of our democracy; infusing regulations into the selection process fundamentally conflicts with our notion of representative democracy. Nevertheless, in line with their constitutional obligation to provide a public education, SEAs can explore a variety of means to not only hold low-performing districts accountable for results but also the school board members responsible for making critical decisions that shape public schools.

Conclusions

Local school board governance is an historical carryover reflecting our rural roots as opposed to an intentional structure designed to produce optimal results for students. Whereas it was rational to elect local citizens to run small public schools to ensure the schools reflected the community's values and distinct economy in the 19th century, today's complex policy context and global economy could arguably benefit from a different structure. Nevertheless, our collective commitment to local control and school board governance runs deep; regardless of concerns about challenges involved with locally elected school board members governing complex systems, school boards are a mainstay of our public school governance structure. As we strive to address nagging concerns about

performance, it is critical that SEAs consider strategies to leverage their authority and resources to boost local school board capacity to turn around failing schools.

There is an established link between effective boards and effective schools and districts, but it is unclear whether the link is causal or correlational (i.e., are high performing districts able to recruit and sustain effective boards, or do effective boards lead to high performance?). In districts with low-performing schools, school boards can, and arguably should, play a central role in creating the right conditions to initiate, support, and sustain bold improvement efforts. To assume this important role, boards need to move past focusing on the "killer b's" to a more sophisticated leadership model in which they intentionally set priorities, develop strategic plans, align resources, and hold key actors accountable for actions required to sustain a laser sharp focus on student outcomes.

As policy leaders at the federal, state, and local level continue to devote increasingly scarce resources to school turnaround efforts, local school boards must be part of the conversation if there is hope for dramatic and sustainable change. Rather than dismiss school boards from the conversations as antiquated holdovers from a different time and short of a massive overhaul of how school districts are governed, local school boards are positioned to play a critical role in turnaround.

Action Principles

Communicate importance of local schools boards to turnaround efforts

- Embed guidance related to meaningfully engaging local school board members as critical stakeholders positioned to shepherd coherent, effective, and sustainable turnaround efforts in training and written documentation related to federal and state interventions (e.g., ESEA Flexibility waivers, Race to the Top for states and districts, SIG, 21st Century Schools).
- Produce tools to assist a school board to develop strategic goals and robust implementation plans to drive focused, bold turnaround efforts and ensure the budget process and priorities align with the strategic plan.
- Create incentives for districts (e.g., waiver of state required administrative, streamlined reporting requirements) embarking upon turnaround efforts to nurture a culture of board professionalism that includes paying board stipends and allocating financial support for turnaround-specific board training opportunities.

Integrate local school boards in Regional Comprehensive Centers' and Content Centers' plans

- Promote meaningful local school board engagement and training as essential components of successful and sustainable school turnaround initiatives.

- Incorporate local school board training, coaching, support, and self-evaluation in individual state technical assistance plans developed by Regional Comprehensive Centers.

Develop policies and allocate resources to facilitate school board training

- Promote training requirements for new and experienced school board members focused on process as well as substantive issues critical to establishing conditions for district and school turnaround (e.g., effective superintendent hiring, supervision and evaluation, understanding data, negotiating for performance-based teacher assessment systems).
- Provide experienced board members, and especially board chairpersons, with access to relevant and timely training related to school turnaround.
- Develop tools to track and publish board training and capacity building efforts as part of broader state accountability systems.
- Incubate executive education opportunities with local institutions of higher education (e.g., colleges of education; colleges of business) to secure turnaround-specific leadership training opportunities for new and experienced board members in districts with low-performing schools identified for turnaround.

Engage external stakeholders to drive and support local school boards

- Network with regional philanthropies to invest in school board capacity building efforts in districts with schools identified for turnaround.
- Enlist the business community (e.g., local chambers of commerce with a vested interest in the success of public schools) to cultivate a sense of urgency related to school turnaround, invest in building board capacity, and promote board member accountability.
- Engage and support key associations' (e.g., state superintendents and school board associations) work to ensure they have the capacity to be key resources for local school boards embarking upon focused turnaround efforts.

References

Alliance for Excellent Education. (n.d.). *About the crisis*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis

Alsbury, T. (2008). *The future of school board governance: Relevancy and revelation*. New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Education.

Badertscher, N., & Salzer, J. (2010, October 11). School boards lax on training mandate. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Retrieved from http://www.ajc.com/news/school-boards-lax-on-675245.html

Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. (2004). *Locating the dropout crisis: Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts? Where are they located? Who attends them?* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Brinson, D., Kowal, J., & Hassel, B. C. (2007). *School turnarounds: A review of the cross-sector evidence on dramatic organizational improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement/Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Carr, N. (2012, February). Investing in board leadership. *American School Board Journal, 199*(2), 32.

Delagardelle, M. L. (2008). The lighthouse inquiry: Examining the role of school board leadership in the improvement of student achievement. In T. Alsbury (Ed.), *The future of school board governance: Relevancy and revelation* (pp. 191–224). New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Education.

Duncan, A. (2009, June 22). *Turning around the bottom five percent.* Secretary Arne Duncan's Remarks at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Conference, Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/turning-around-bottom-five-percent

Education Resource Strategies. (2011). *Sustaining school turnaround at scale*. Boston, MA: Author.

Frank, S., & Miles, K. H. (2012, July 18). Improving special education even in tough times. *Education Week, 31*(36), 24–25. Retrieved from http://www.erstrategies.org/news/improving_special_education_in_tough_times

Gremberling, K. W., Smith, C. W., & Villani, J. S. (2000). *The key work of school boards guidebook*. Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association.

Hawkins, B. (2012, June 5). *Is it a good idea to evaluate school boards using test data?* Minneapolis, MN: MinnPost. Retrieved from http://www.minnpost.com/learning-curve/2012/06/it-good-idea-evaluate-school-boards-using-test-data

Hess, F. (2008, August). Assessing the case for Mayoral control of urban schools. *Education Outlook, 4*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute.

Hess, F., & Meeks, O. (2011). *School boards circa 2010: Governance in the accountability era*. Washington, DC: National School Boards Association.

Institute for a Competitive Workforce. (2012, May). *School board case studies*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://icw.uschamber.com/publication/school-board-case-studies

Iowa Association of School Boards. (2000, October). *The Lighthouse Inquiry: School board/superintendent team behaviors in school districts with extreme differences in student achievement*. Paper presented at the at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA. Retrieved from http://www.ia-sb.org/assets/FADFDF72-BE9D-48D7-8CF9-19B823F0CDA1.pdf

Kirst, M. W. (2008). The evolving role of school boards: Retrospect and prospect. In T. L. Alsbury (Ed.), *The future of school board governance: Relevancy and revelation* (pp. 37–60). New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Education.

Kowalski, T. J. (2008). School reform, civic engagement, and school board leadership. In T. L. Alsbury (Ed.), *The future of school board governance: Relevancy and revelation.* New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Education.

Land, D. (2002, January). *Local school boards under review: Their role and effectiveness in relation to students' academic achievement*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk.

Maeroff, G. (2011). *School boards in America: A flawed exercise in democracy*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Maxwell, L. (2009, October). In Pittsburgh, monitors hold school board accountable. *Education Week, 29*(7), 4 & 5. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/10/14/07wallace-pittsburgh.h29.html

Megan, K. (2013, July 25). Bridgeport schools chief to stay in job during appeal. *The Hartford Courant*.

Mussoni, J. (2011, April 30). Christina school district rescinds vote and avoids Race to the Top funding confrontation*. NewsWorks*. Retrieved from http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local//delaware-feature/18488-christina-school-district-rescinds-vote-and-avoids-race-to-the-top-funding-confrontation

National School Boards Association. (2012, May 24). *NSBA reviews RTTT proposal for school districts.* Retrieved from http://schoolboardnews.nsba.org/2012/05/nsba-reviews-rttt-proposal-for-school-districts/

National School Boards Association. (2010). *Mandated training for local school board members survey*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

National School Boards Association. (2011). *What school boards need to know: Data conversations. A report for school boards in planning for and using data systematically*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Public Impact. (2008). *School turnarounds: Actions and results.* Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement/Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Rhim, L. M. (2013). *Moving beyond the killer b's: The role of school boards in school accountability and transformation*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Rhim, L. M., & Redding, S. (2011). *Fulcrum of change: Leveraging 50 states to turn around 5,000 schools*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Rhee, M., & Fenty, A. (2010, October 30). The education manifesto. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303362404575580221511231074.html#printMode

Samuels, C. S. (2011, November 10). Board races in N.C., Minn. draw voter interest. *Education Week, 31*(12). Retrieved from: http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/11/10/12schoolboard.h31.html?tkn=MVOF5XREBzxTv0BU96VsyfkJHU%2BWFULD8ZRF&print=1

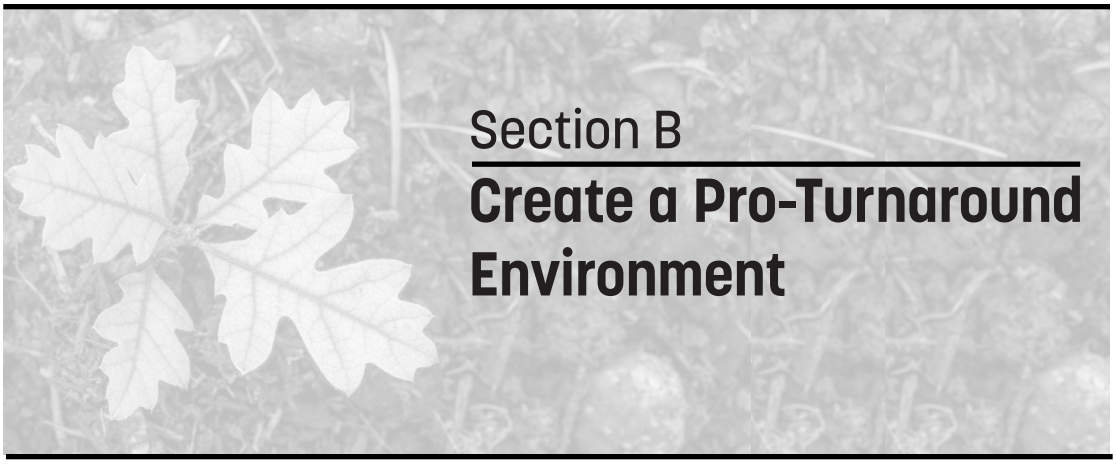
Strauss, V. (2013, June 29). Why judge ordered Paul Vallas removed as Bridgeport schools chief. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/06/29/why-judge-ordered-paul-vallas-removed-as-bridgeport-schools-chief/

Texas Education Agency. (2013). *School board member training*. Austin, TX: Author. Retrieved from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=4327

Walzser, N. (2009). *The essential school board book: Better governance in the age of accountability*. Boston, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Wong, K. K., &. Shen, F. X. (2005). When mayors lead urban schools: Assessing the effects of mayoral takeover. In W. G. Howell (Ed.), *Besieged: School boards and the future of education politics* (pp. 81–100). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Yudoff, Y., Kirp, D., Levin, B., & Moran, R. (2001). *Educational policy and the law* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: West-Wadsworth.



Section B

Create a Pro-Turnaround Environment

Successful School Turnarounds Through Labor–Management Partnerships: The Role for State Education Agencies

Ken Futernick and Adam Urbanski

In recent years, the federal government has made unprecedented investments in programs designed to turn around the nation's lowest performing schools. The Race to the Top program (RTTT), announced in 2009, provided $4.35 billion in grants to states that agreed to adopt specific reforms and to turn around their lowest achieving schools. That same year, the U.S. Department of Education also provided $3.5 billion in Title I School Improvement Grants (SIGs) to turn around the nation's lowest performing schools.

It's too early to tell whether RTTT and SIG will produce dramatic and sustainable improvements in the schools they target, but if similar efforts to turn schools around in the U.S. are any indication, the odds may be low (Smarick, 2010). As University of Chicago sociologist Charles Payne notes in his book, *So Much Reform, So Little Change*, "After a couple of years of being energetically reformed, most schools, especially bottom tier schools, and most school systems seem to be pretty much the same kind of organizations they were at the beginning" (Payne, 2008, p. 4).

However, Payne is referring to reforms that have been undertaken in the U.S. A significant number of low performing schools in places like Finland, Canada, and Singapore, have made significant and sustained improvements, demonstrating that chronically failing schools can, in fact, be turned around at scale (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2011; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010). The question is, what lessons can education officials in the U.S. learn from these countries? Researcher Michael Fullan believes the U.S. must place more emphasis on building social capital:

> By adding social capital-based strategies you get multiple benefits. For example, focused collaborative practices mobilize and customize knowledge in the system, enabling teachers to know what other teachers do and to learn from them. In addition to leveraging instructional capacity, purposeful collaboration serves as the most effective form of lateral accountability. When combined with transparency of results, the whole apparatus fosters both collective ownership of educational practice and accountability to the public. Finally, these actions represent the best route to developing a trusted and respected profession. This is what successful countries are doing. (2011, p. 12)

One way that educators in countries with successful turnaround records build and sustain social capital is through collaboration between teacher unions and management. Government officials in Finland's widely acclaimed school system have long worked closely with the country's strong teacher unions and view them as essential partners. Struggling public schools in Ontario, Canada have made dramatic improvements in academic achievement in recent years, but government leaders and teacher unions had been bitter adversaries prior to this turnaround. In 2003, officials tried a different approach to address stagnating student performance. According to writer Marc Tucker, who studied the reform effort in Ontario, "They brought teachers and their unions to the table for discussions of education reform strategy and won their trust by listening hard to what the teachers had to say and then providing the needed support. The reform strategy that they adopted assumed that teachers wanted to do the right thing but lacked the capacity to do it" (2012, p. 20).

Relations between management and labor unions in the U.S. have historically been adversarial, which may help to explain why school turnaround efforts here have floundered. Many local and state teacher unions have actively resisted some of the turnaround policies required by programs like RTTT and SIG (e.g., replacing 50% or more of the teaching staff; using academic growth to evaluate teachers), and the absence of a collaborative environment has surely not promoted the "collective ownership of educational practice" that Fullan and others have observed outside the U.S.

The good news is that partnerships between labor and management are rapidly emerging in the U.S., and the impact of these partnerships appears promising, especially in districts that are engaged in school turnaround work. Our goal in this chapter is to acquaint state education agencies (SEAs) with key findings from case study research on the impact of labor–management collaboration on school policy and practice and to show how this collaboration is breaking down the fierce resistance to change that has hampered so many turnaround efforts. We also offer specific recommendations to SEAs based on the success several have had promoting a climate of trust, innovation, and collaboration among local stakeholders in their states.

School Turnarounds and Resistance to Change

Successful school turnaround efforts—those designed to produce swift, dramatic, sustained improvements in student academic performance—require drastic changes in policy and practice. In the case of the federal SIG program, for instance, schools using the "transformation" model must replace the principal and extend learning time for students and collaboration time for teachers. They must also adopt new teacher and principal evaluation systems that use student academic growth as a key indicator. Teachers who perform well must be rewarded, and those who don't must be removed. In schools following SIG's "turnaround" or "restart" models, most or all of the teachers can be replaced. Other turnaround strategies, like getting "quick wins" and breaking organizational norms, while not mandated, have emerged as recommendations from the research on successful turnaround efforts (Calkins et al., 2007; Kowall & Ableidinger, 2011).

Explanations for the dismal results of school turnaround initiatives abound, but one of the most compelling is that the changes in policy and practice are frequently met with apprehension and resistance from education stakeholders (see, for instance, GAO, 2012).[1] Considerable opposition has come from teachers and their unions who have argued that teachers should not be expected to work a longer day or longer school year without additional compensation; that standardized test scores are an imperfect indicator of learning and should not be used to evaluate or compensate teachers; and that teachers who struggle in highly challenging schools should not be removed unless and until they have been given ample support from accomplished colleagues.

Such resistance from local stakeholders presents formidable challenges to local and state education leaders. If teachers and their unions do not buy into the changes, or worse, resist them, the prospects for successful school turnarounds will surely be diminished and may well be doomed from the start. In 2009, many states competed for federal RTTT funds, but many were denied because management and labor leaders were unable to agree on required elements of the program. Many local districts have had difficulty implementing required elements of the federal SIG program, again because local labor and management leaders could not agree to the terms of the program (Garland, 2012; Klein, 2012; Lachlan-Haché, Naik, & Casserly, 2012).

A growing body of research shows that many of the reforms required for successful school turnarounds are successfully implemented when local labor and management leaders establish a foundation of trust, agree to make student learning their primary objective, and implement critical reforms collaboratively. In Delaware, for instance, where $100 million in RTTT funds were awarded, change management advisory councils led by state education officials helped

[1]See, for instance, the GAO report, *School Improvement Grants: Education Should Take Additional Steps to Enhance Accountability for Schools and Contractors* (April 2012).

resolve a number of contentious labor issues that arose during the grant competition (Cavanagh, 2011).

As noted above, the use of new teacher evaluation systems based on student academic growth has proven to be particularly challenging for many districts. However, after union leaders and administrators in the Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland agreed to operate as partners rather than adversaries and then worked together to replace the district's antiquated teacher evaluation system, they created a comprehensive alternative that included high-quality professional development and extensive training for principals to ensure teacher evaluations would be fair and constructive. When leaders in two California districts—Poway Unified and San Juan Unified—used collaboration rather than confrontation to jointly develop peer-assistance and review programs, they created nationally recognized models that provide intensive support for struggling teachers and an effective, union-supported way to dismiss those who do not improve (Humphrey, Koppich, & Bland, 2011). Similar turnaround-friendly reforms have emerged through labor–management collaboration in New Haven, Connecticut; Memphis, Tennessee; and Seminole County, Florida (Hobbs, 2012). It behooves SEAs to promote labor–management collaboration because many of the reforms that are critical to successful school turnarounds are more likely to be adopted and implemented effectively when labor and management are working together.

Despite the encouraging reforms that have emerged through collaboration, labor–management partnerships have been the exception and not the rule. But recent events suggest that labor relations in U.S. public education may have reached a critical turning point—one that may signal a dramatic increase in the number of districts in which unions and management are collaborating to improve the quality of their schools. In February 2011, the nation's leading management and labor organizations and the U.S. Department of Education co-sponsored the first of its kind national conference on labor–management collaboration. Superintendents, labor leaders, and board presidents from 150 school districts convened in Denver, Colorado to hear first hand how districts like those mentioned above are leveraging collaboration to improve student learning and to support school turnaround efforts. A follow-up study conducted a year after the conference found that many of the participating districts had begun to collaborate on a broad range of policies and practices designed to improve the academic outcomes of their students (Futernick, McClellan, & Vince, 2011). A similar conference was conducted in Cincinnati in May 2012, and the same group of labor and management co-sponsors signed a shared vision statement to transform the teaching profession into an environment where leadership and responsibility are shared. Because of the success of these two national conferences, additional national, regional, and state events are in the works (Education Week, 2011).

In the next section, we examine research on labor–management collaboration and the impact it has had on policies associated with successful school

turnaround initiatives. Then, to help SEAs understand the role they can play in promoting collaborative partnerships, we describe several successful initiatives that have emerged at the state and regional levels. In the final section, we recommend specific strategies that SEAs can use to strengthen school turnaround efforts through labor–management collaboration.

Labor–Management Collaboration and Its Impact on School Quality

The Purpose of Collaboration

Collaboration, simply defined, calls for parties to communicate well and to work in a productive manner. However, as Daniel Humphrey and Julia Koppich point out in their book on peer review, "The promise of collaborative bargaining is not simply in changing the tenor of the discussion, in increasing the level of civility. The promise of collaborative bargaining lies in altering the substance of labor–management discussions and agreements. It lies in management and union being willing to examine the previously unexamined, doing the hard work together of confronting tough, high-stakes issues, and reaching accord on how to proceed when decisions carry real and human consequences" (Humphrey et al., 2011, p. 30).

Simply getting along with one another is not the goal for highly collaborative districts that have something to show for their efforts. Collaboration is a means to an end—a way to create conditions for powerful teaching and learning and, ultimately, to achieve equitable outcomes for all students. When parties are not collaborating, they usually resort to an adversarial approach to achieve their respective goals. Without a common set of purposes, parties do compromise but usually only to avoid losses or costly and time-consuming arbitrations.

In districts where collaboration is practiced, disputes still occur, and some of them must still be resolved through mediation. The difference is that these district leaders continue collaborating to solve other problems where progress is being made. Important work does not come to a halt just because an impasse has been reached on particular issues. With a foundation of mutual trust, collaborative leaders engage in "constructive conflict" and work together to avoid problems before they emerge (Futernick et al., 2013). In Douglas County, Colorado, union president Brenda Smith described the tangible benefits of improved professional relationships in her district:

> Our district has really focused in on relationship building. We, as an organization, as a teacher's voice, are always at the table talking about what's next so there are no surprises. We have not filed a grievance in over six years. We typically make a phone call prior to a grievance and solve issues through dialogue and open communication. Part of this comes from building relationships, getting to know whom you're dealing with inside the system and when there are problems, solving them very quickly. (as cited in Eckert, 2011, p. 17)

Another misconception about collaboration is that overly friendly relationships among parties with different interests will lead to collusion—that leaders will "give away the store," not represent the interests of their constituents, and weaken their power base. This fear may account for much of the skepticism about collaboration that is prevalent among labor and management leaders who are unacquainted with the outcomes achieved in highly collaborative districts. This skepticism can be overcome when conferences, symposia, and site visits provide opportunities for school leaders and school board members to learn first hand from those working in similar roles how collaboration can produce the results they want for their schools and students.

The Impact of Labor–Management Collaboration

A meta-analysis of case study research[2] on districts where labor–management collaboration is practiced shows that this strategy frequently leads to two types of outcomes that are particularly important for districts engaged in school turnaround efforts. The first outcome is improved professional relationships and trust among leaders in the district. The tangible benefits of increased social capital are effective communication, innovation, and problem solving, which are vital to school turnaround work. Turning around chronically failing schools, each with their own unique challenges, is exceedingly complex work, and there are no scripts or formulas for district leaders to follow. All stakeholders—including teachers, classified staff, union leaders, administrators, community leaders, and parents—must be able to devise and implement sound, creative strategies with maximum support from all groups. Tension and conflict are an inevitable by-product of change, and they are quick to surface in places where reform efforts have repeatedly failed in the past and the expectations for rapid change are high. But tensions and conflicts can be mitigated and the prospects for successful turnaround heightened if labor and management leaders can establish a foundation of trust and communicate effectively in the turnaround effort.

The second way that labor–management collaboration has influenced school turnaround efforts is by helping local stakeholders adopt policies that are recommended by research or required by government agencies (e.g., the federal RTTT and SIG programs). Some of the key policies that have emerged through labor–management collaboration include: improved teacher evaluation systems that take into account student academic growth; extended learning time for students and collaboration time for teachers; and peer-assistance and review programs that provide additional support to struggling teachers and remove those who

[2]In 2012, WestEd conducted a meta-analysis of 7 recent investigations that examined 50 district cases from across 23 states where labor–management collaboration was practiced. Data from these case studies typically came from interviews, direct observation, surveys, and artifacts such as contracts, informal agreements, reports, and meeting minutes. WestEd researchers used this data to identify common patterns and themes within and across these district cases. This study is being published by WestEd.

cannot improve. We examine a few cases to illustrate how collaboration has enabled districts to enact policies that not only met the turnaround requirements but often exceeded them.

In Minnesota's St. Francis Independent School District, union leaders working with management established a "Teacher Academy" to support professional development, evaluation, and compensation innovations. In response to a state funding initiative, the collaboration led to the development of the Student Performance Improvement Program (SPIP), which incorporated a career ladder and additional pay for accomplished teachers and a new teacher evaluation system. Initially, only 54% of the district's teachers supported this program, but within one year, 85% of the district's teachers voted to support it, and 90% of the teachers were participating in SPIP a few years later (Eckert, 2011). Evidence of success is seen in the district's low teacher turnover rate—less than 2% per year—which leaders credit to SPIP (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010).

The Plattsburgh City School District in New York experienced years of contentious labor–management relations before adopting a collaborative approach. A new relationship and shared decision-making process laid the groundwork for the successful implementation of a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program. Such programs, which first emerged in Toledo, Ohio in 1981, were designed to improve classroom instruction by allowing accomplished teachers to work with new teachers and struggling veteran teachers. PAR programs were also designed to assist with decisions about whether to retain teachers. Prior to implementation, a diverse design team in Plattsburgh, which included teachers, administrators, and a representative from State University of New York at Plattsburgh, attended two 3-day meetings every three months for over a year (WestEd, 2011). The design team eventually implemented a PAR system that emphasized "shared risk taking, informed professional practice, and high-level student outcomes" (Eckert, 2011, p. 38) and continues to direct the district's professional development efforts, observe all new teachers up to 20 times each year, and provide administrators with extensive data to support tenure decisions (WestEd, 2011).[3] The reforms undertaken in these districts may not be ones that others would want to adopt to help turn around their schools, but the key lesson is that these important changes in district policy would not have come about were it not for the commitment leaders in these district made to collaborate with one another.

Labor–management collaboration has also led to the effective implementation of extended learning time (ELT). ELT is a key component of many school turnaround initiatives and another policy change that often leads to resistance from teacher unions.[4] In 2005, a coalition of state government and education

[3]Dan Humphrey and Julia Koppich recently conducted a study of PAR programs and the role labor–management collaboration played in the design and implementation of these programs (Humphrey et al., 2011).

[4]Increases in the length of the school day was one of the major issues that led the Chicago Teachers Union to strike in fall 2012.

leaders in Massachusetts launched the Expanded Learning Time Initiative to improve student outcomes in core subjects and to ensure that all students receive a well-rounded education. According to the Boston-based National Center on Time and Learning:

> In the fall of 2006, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to implement a statewide initiative to dramatically expand the school calendar in traditional public schools. Ten schools in five districts implemented a new school day adding approximately two extra hours a day for all students. Over the past four years, the Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative has grown. In school year 2010-2011, 19 schools in 9 districts across the Commonwealth, serving more than 10,500 students, are participating. (National Center on Time and Learning, 2010, p. 1)

The goals of extending learning time for students are laudable, but adding time to the school day or days to the school year poses several challenges for labor and management. How will teachers be compensated if they work longer hours or additional days? Where will the resources come from to pay them? What if teachers with children of their own at home are unable to teach a longer school day? Many schools and districts have been unable to find solutions to questions like these, but others like the Chelsea Public School in Massachusetts and the Oklahoma City Schools have adopted extended learning policies that both sides find amenable. As illustrated below, collaboration between management and labor enabled parties to agree to extended learning time policies.[5]

The Chelsea Public School District was one of several to participate in the state's ELT initiative. After working with management on a plan to increase learning time, teachers in eight of the nine district schools voted to submit extended learning proposals. Deputy superintendent Mary Bourque and Chelsea Teachers union president Mary Ferriter believed collaboration between labor and management was essential to the successful implementation of this initiative. Leaders from both sides said this was one of the first times they had worked together to solve an important educational problem. According to Bourque, "Everyone needed to be talking. We couldn't exist in silos anymore" (Vince, 2011).

The Oklahoma City Schools were recipients of SIG funds, which required the district to implement several reforms, including extended learning time for students in the district's five participating schools. A collaborative relationship that had formed between a new district superintendent, Karl Springer, and union president Ed Allen laid the groundwork for the cooperation that was needed to develop a restructuring plan for SIG. Several months of meetings facilitated by the American Federation of Teachers resulted in customized reform plans,

[5]It remains to be seen, of course, whether extended learning time, as required by programs like SIG, will lead to improved outcomes for students. If it does, districts that want to sustain it will have to find funds to support it when their current grants expire.

including provisions for ELT, for each SIG school. Springer and Allen credit the progress made to a commitment on both sides to work together on matters affecting student learning (Vince, 2011).

One of the hallmarks of successful school reform efforts is a high degree of collaboration and buy-in from local stakeholders (Blair, 2000; Rubenstein & McCarthy, 2010). Nowhere is this collaboration more important than among labor leaders and management, especially when it comes to developing sound policies on matters such as teacher evaluation, support for struggling teachers, and extended learning time. Because school turnarounds are extraordinarily challenging, these leaders must be able to communicate effectively to solve complex problems as partners rather than as adversaries.

State and Regional Efforts to Promote Labor–Management Collaboration

In this section, we highlight efforts at the state level that contribute to collaborative labor–management relations. These efforts provide valuable lessons for SEAs that want to help lay the groundwork for successful school turnarounds in their states.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts' public schools have consistently ranked among the top in the U.S. in terms of academic achievement. The state is also widely recognized as a leader in educational collaboration—between labor, management, higher education, and nonprofit organizations (Bluestone & Kochan, 2011). Many state educators believe much of the success of their schools and a successful bid to receive federal Race to the Top funds is attributable to this collaboration.

A strong track record with labor–management led to the formation of the Massachusetts Education Partnership (MEP) in 2012 that had broad representation from the state's administrator organization, the two leading teacher unions, and four leading research centers. MEP's purpose "is to help labor–management teams of superintendents, union leaders, school committee members, teachers, and administrators to develop active collaborations in the area of labor–management relations and school-site operations, in order to:

- Accelerate student achievement and promote student success;
- Increase teacher engagement and leadership in school and district governance;
- Improve the productivity of bargaining practices; and
- Institute policies, structures, and practices for sustainable collaboration and reform. (MEP, n.d., para. 1)

MEP recently launched several initiatives, including support for interest-based bargaining, dissemination of knowledge through a new website, and the convening of conferences for labor and management leaders, researchers, and policymakers to discuss educational issues of mutual interest. In addition, MEP

has announced the District Capacity Project (DCP) that will allow local districts to receive intensive support from a team of experts on challenges selected by local labor and management leaders. According to Nancy Peace, Executive Director of MEP, "[t]he selected districts will also be given the opportunity to participate in Capacity Institutes for skill development, planning, and networking, and join other DCP teams in an online community that will encourage them to share their learning and gain access to experts in specific areas of education reform" (2012, p. 2).

California

In 2012, California Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, appointed an Educator Excellence Task Force to formulate recommendations that would strengthen educator effectiveness in the state. Members of the Task Force included representatives from the education policy community, higher education, teacher unions, school management, school boards, family and community advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, nonprofit support providers, and the business community. In September 2012, the Task Force released a report titled *Greatness By Design*, which included detailed recommendations on topics ranging from educator preparation, teacher recruitment, professional learning, educator evaluation, leadership, and career development. The report also included these recommendations for labor–management collaboration:

> Implementation of many of the Task Force's recommendations will require policy changes at the state level, but some will also require innovative new agreements between labor and management at the district level. New systems of evaluation for teachers and administrators recommended in this report will need to become part of the collective bargaining process, with care taken to ensure that they are fully understood by all stakeholders in a district, including parents, students, and community members.
>
> The state should…promote labor–management collaboration to enable innovation in educator roles, responsibilities, and compensation systems. Concrete steps should include a statewide conference on labor–management collaboration to share innovative practices and to promote cross-district dialogue; creation of a comprehensive statewide agenda for improving labor–management relations in school districts across the state; and a focus in training programs for both teacher leaders and administrators on understanding strategies for labor–management collaboration and opportunities to learn new collaborative skills. (Educator Excellence Task Force, 2012, p. 18)

Since the release of the Task Force report, several steps have been taken to implement these recommendations. Local and state labor leaders from the state's largest teacher unions are formulating plans with management leaders to conduct symposiums and on-site district study tours so educators throughout

the state can learn from districts that have formed labor–management partnerships.

In spring 2013, CalTURN, the state chapter of the national Teachers Union Reform Network, and WestEd co-sponsored a conference on collaboration; the theme was "Effective Implementation of Common Core State Standards Through Labor–Management Collaboration." Close to 150 educators, including labor–management teams from nearly 20 California school districts, attended the conference.

Illinois

Nearly 25 years ago, the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) was formed by union leaders, administrators, school board members with support from local universities, and philanthropic organizations. CEC's collaborative mission has been to improve student learning and achievement, and its work focuses on:

- Building educator capacity through coaching, training, mentoring, networking, and facilitating;
- Accelerating use of leading school improvement ideas, practices, and practitioners through robust partnerships;
- Supporting implementation of customized, evidence-based, effective practices across districts and schools; and
- Enabling district and school teams to be more effective and efficient in continuous improvement efforts.[6]

Through a "Dialogue Group" formed in 2006, CEC laid the groundwork for several education policy initiatives, including the Burnham Plan which established a comprehensive reform agenda for the state, and the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), signed into law in 2010 by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. PERA requires all districts to implement multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems that include observations by trained evaluators and evidence of student academic growth. As noted previously, these evaluation systems are key components of RTTT, SIG, and general guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. The state board of education has contracted with CEC to provide training for approximately 9,000 teacher and administrator evaluators. CEC will also help design standards-based evaluation systems for principals and will provide technical assistance to districts implementing these educator evaluation systems.[7]

Despite the strong track record of collaboration among education stakeholders in Illinois, it did not avert the bitter 7-day strike by the Chicago Teachers Union in fall 2012 over teacher evaluations, the length of the school day, and

[6]These focus areas and additional information about CEC are listed in the organization's website at http://cecillinois.org/about/mission-vision/

[7]Information about PERA and CEC's role in implementation is available at http://www.growththroughlearningillinois.org/

job security. After a settlement was reached with the Chicago mayor's office, both sides were positive about the outcomes, but a recent announcement by the mayor to close 54 of the city's schools has refueled tensions among local stakeholders. It remains to be seen how these ongoing disputes in Chicago will impact progress by the CEC to promote collaboration among the state's education stakeholders.

The Teachers Union Reform Network

Early efforts to advance labor–management collaboration in education were first made by the Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN), a coalition of local teacher unions founded in 1996 by Adam Urbanski, president of the Rochester Teachers Association, and the late Helen Bernstein, former president of the United Teachers Los Angeles. TURN's mission has been to promote a "responsible and responsive teacher unionism" in which labor and management work together to protect the interests of teachers and students, improve working and learning conditions in schools, and implement solutions to advance student learning.

Operating now in five regions,[8] TURN's regional satellites conduct meetings throughout the year and often invite state and national education leaders to participate. At the September 2012 meeting of Northeast TURN, for example, 70 participants representing 17 local districts and 6 states heard presentations on "Building a Culture of Collaboration, a Case Study of Collaboration in Providence, Rhode Island," and "Lessons from Delaware: Race to the Top and Teacher Evaluation." At the Fall 2012 Southwest TURN meeting in Denver, the Colorado Education Association and TURN co-sponsored "The First Annual Summit: Shared Accountability and Leadership for Student Achievement." This was a response to a new Colorado law requiring districts to adopt multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems.

Summary

Among all of the education reform initiatives that school districts in the U.S. are expected to undertake, turning around persistently low-performing schools may be the most challenging. While significant funds have become available to support district turnaround efforts through federal programs such as RTTT and SIG, the policy changes required by these programs—like replacing teachers, closing schools, adding hours to the school day, and evaluating and compensating teachers based on the academic performance of their students—present their own obstacles. Unless teacher unions and management are able to hammer out special agreements to accommodate the required policy changes, many turnaround initiatives will not get off the ground.

[8]TURN satellites include Southwest TURN, Northeast TURN, CalTURN, Great Lakes TURN, and Mid Atlantic/Southeast TURN. TURN's website is located at http://www.turnexchange.net/national_turn/whyturn.html

Even after the requisite agreements are made, case study research has shown that districts can overcome many of the most difficult school turnaround challenges when local teacher unions and management agree to work as partners rather than adversaries. This research also demonstrates that a shift toward collaboration does not happen easily or quickly. Districts that have adopted a collaborative approach often rely on external assistance to cultivate that relationship between labor and management because it requires deliberate attention and often requires assistance from experienced practitioners. Many that have succeeded in cultivating labor–management partnerships have not only been able to meet the funding requirements of RTTT and SIG but also surpass them.

By helping to build state capacity for labor–management collaboration, SEAs can create an environment that is more conducive to trust, problem solving, and a shared focus on student outcomes—organizational characteristics that are necessary for any successful school reform effort and especially important for school turnarounds. In the next section, we offer several action principles that SEAs can use to build capacity for labor–management collaboration.

Action Principles

Build internal capacity to support labor–management collaboration

- Learn about the organizations and districts that are early adopters of labor–management collaboration and assess the knowledge and attitudes of key state leaders toward this approach. These questions can guide the data gathering process:
  - What districts have participated in the two recent national conferences on labor–management collaboration? Did any of these districts make presentations?[9]
  - What are the attitudes of leaders from state teachers unions, policymakers, and administrator or school board organizations, and have they taken a stand on labor–management collaboration? Consider holding informal conversations with key leaders and reviewing organizations' websites.
  - What universities, research institutes, and nonprofit organizations exist in the state or region that have expertise in this area, and what kind of technical support are they able to provide?
- SEA staff, particularly those involved in RTTT and SIG, should gather and disseminate knowledge to SEA colleagues about labor–management collaboration and participate in events on labor–management collaboration, including regional TURN conferences.
- SEAs that want to become credible advocates for collaboration in school

[9]Information about these conferences and the districts that attended is available at http://www.ed.gov/labor–management-collaboration. The Department of Education's website shows the districts that participated and presented.

districts will need to model effective collaborative practices. This can best be accomplished with the assistance of trained facilitators who can assess current organizational structures and practices and assist with activities that will strengthen collaboration.

Build state and LEA capacity for labor–management collaboration and school turnarounds

- Facilitate the formation of education partnerships like MEP in Massachusetts and CEC in Illinois.
- Encourage state education organizations to learn about the impact of labor–management collaboration and to take a stand in support of this approach.
- Use websites, webinars, and other delivery methods to disseminate research findings, tools, promising practices, conferences, and trainings to LEAs.
- Convene exploratory meetings in which labor and management leaders can safely discuss their knowledge, interests, and concerns about labor–management collaboration.
- Encourage state and local education leaders to participate in regional TURN conferences.[10]
- Facilitate a state or regional conference on labor–management collaboration modeled after the ones held nationally in 2011 and 2012.[11]
- Facilitate "Study Tours," which allow districts to see firsthand how other districts are using collaboration in service of their school turnaround efforts.
- Develop "communities of practice" among like-minded districts.[12]

References

Blair, L. A. (2000). *Strategies for success: Implementing a comprehensive school reform program*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Bluestone, B., & Kochan, T. (2011). *Toward a new grand bargain. Collaborative approaches to labor–management reform in Massachusetts*. Boston, MA: The Boston Foundation.

Bosetti, K. R. (2011). *Peer review: Getting serious about teacher evaluation*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

[10]Contact information and conference dates for TURN can be found at www.turnexchange.net

[11]Information about these events is available at http://www.ed.gov/labor–management-collaboration. An independent study of the 2011 conference in Denver includes recommendations for conference planners. This report, titled *Forward Together: Better Schools Through Labor–management Collaboration*, is available at www.wested.org/lmc. A toolkit for conducting labor–management conferences is available at www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/lmc-conference-toolkit.pdf

[12]For more information on the benefits of this practice, see Unger et al. (2008). *How can state education agencies support district improvement: A conversation amongst educational leaders, researchers, and policy actors*. Providence, RI: The Education Alliance at Brown University. (p. 27)

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The turnaround challenge*. Boston, MA: Mass Insight.

Cavanagh, S. (2011, November). States urged to promote union–district cooperation. *Education Week, 31*(12), S13–S14.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Education Week. (2011, November). Joining forces: A special report on labor–management collaboration. *Education Week, 31*(12). Retrieved from www.edweek.org/go/collaboration

Educator Excellence Task Force. (2012). *Greatness by design*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ee.asp

Fullan, M. (2011). *The wrong drivers for whole system reform*. (Seminar Series Paper No. 204). East Melbourne, Victoria: Centre for Strategic Education.

Futernick, K., McClellan, S., & Vince, S. (2012). *Forward together: Better schools through labor–management collaboration*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Futernick, K., McClellan, S., Vince, S., & Shirley, D. (in press). *Labor–management collaboration in education: The process, the impact, and the prospects for change*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

GAO. (2012, April). *School improvement grants: Education should take additional steps to enhance accountability for schools and contractors*. Retrieved from http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-373

Garland, S. (2012). Teacher evaluation: A hurdle for SIG schools. *Education Week, 31*(28), 19–21.

Hobbs, E. (2012). The push for progressive unionism. *Harvard Education Letter, 28*(6).

Humphrey, D. C., Koppich, J. E., & Bland, J. (2011). A special report on labor–management collaboration. *Education Week, 31*(12). Retrieved from www.edweek.org/go/collaboration

Klein, A. (2012). School turnaround push still a work in progress. *Education Week, 31*(28), 18–21.

Koppich, J. E., Humphrey, D. C., Bland, J. A., Heenan, B., McCaffery, T., Ramage, K., & Stokes, L. (2013). *California's beginning teachers: The bumpy path to a profession.* Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Kowal, J., & Ableidinger, J. (2011). *Leading indicators of school turnarounds.* Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact.

Lachlan-Haché, J., Naik, M., & Casserly, M. (2012). *The school improvement grant rollout in America's great city schools*. Washington, DC: Council of Great City Schools.

Massachusetts Education Partnership (MEP). (n.d.). About the partnership. Boston, MA: Author. Retrieved from http://massedpartnership.org/

Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C., & Barber, M. (2010). *How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better*. Atlanta, GA: McKinsey & Company.

Murphy, P., & Ouijdani, M. (2011). *State capacity for school improvement*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_states_statecap_Aug11_0.pdf

National Center on Time and Learning. (2010). *Background on Massachusetts 2020, the National Center on Time & Learning, and the movement to expand learning time in America*. Boston, MA: Author.

Payne, C. M. (2008). *So much reform, so little change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Peace, N. E. (2012, Fall). Massachusetts Education Partnership: Improving student achievement through labor–management collaboration. *Perspectives Online Companion, 14.* Retrieved from www.leraweb.org/sites/leraweb.org/files/peace4.pdf

Rubenstein, S. A., & McCarthy, J. E. (2010). *Collaborating on school reform: Creating union–management partnerships to improve public school systems*. Camden, NJ: Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations.

Smarick, A. (2010). The turnaround fallacy. *Education Next, 10*(1), 20–26. Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/the-turnaround-fallacy/

Tucker, M. (2012). A different role for teachers unions? *Education Next, 12*(1), 17–20. Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/a-different-role-for-teachers-unions/

Unger, C., Lane, B., Cutler, E., Lee, S., Whitney, J., Arruda, E., & Silva, M. (2008). *How can state education agencies support district improvement?* New York, NY: The Education Alliance, Brown University.

Vince, S. (2011). *Extended time for student learning and teacher collaboration*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Building Human Capital Pipelines: Examining the Role of the State Education Agency

Dennis Woodruff and Cyrillene Clark

Two things are true about talent pipeline work: first, it is absolutely imperative to the sustained vitality of any organization; second, it is really hard work. Yet, investments in human capital pipelines save work in the long run, and there are immediate results that will keep the organization healthy and thriving. When the organization is a school district, state education agencies (SEAs) can facilitate this work, leading to vital, higher performing districts. Considering that the single most significant resource in education is its people, it is essential to get *the right people* in *the right jobs*, doing *the right things*.

A talent pipeline is an intentional system designed to train, cultivate, attract, support, and retain exemplary employees who are prepared to meet rigorous performance expectations. A strong talent pipeline can pay dividends quickly and serve to position an organization for success long term. The superintendent and school board must be passionate about talent for efforts to build the pipeline to be effective.

The Need for Effective Talent Pipelines in Education

Historically, the education sector has not adequately invested in talent pipeline management. The standard career progression is for interested students to enroll in a college of education, earn their diploma, teach, and if interested, self-select into the management track by obtaining an administrator credential and advancing to be a school principal and perhaps central office administrator. Furthermore, as a sector, leadership in public education has not been particularly sophisticated about matching skill sets and competencies with positions (e.g., teaching versus leading or managing) or providing a path for teachers to advance

in their career while remaining in the classroom. While the relative balance of teacher and administrator supply and demand has ebbed and flowed over the years, current research indicates that shortages of personnel are based on retirements and challenges retaining qualified personnel as opposed to straight supply (Ingersoll, 2001, 2002, 2003).

While retention is an ongoing concern for districts, so is teacher supply as a large cohort of teachers reach retirement age. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, n.d.) documented that: "Between 2004 and 2008, 300,000 veteran teachers left the workforce for retirement…. In 1987–88, the typical teacher had 15 years of experience, but by 2007–08 the typical teacher had just 1 to 2 years of experience" (para. 1). Even as we struggle to retain young teachers, demand associated with retirements is increasing (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

As local districts strive to improve their ability to attract and retain both effective teachers and leaders, the role of the SEA in helping to solve this cannot be overstated. SEAs are positioned to change the dynamics of this challenge by examining policies that shape educator and leader credentialing and finding creative ways to fill teacher and principal positions with people who are clearly talented, can relate to today's students, and reflect the demographics in their state's districts.

Based on a review of the relevant literature and our experience working directly with underperforming schools in 14 states over the last three years striving to be more intentional about their talent management strategies, in this chapter we outline the components of a robust talent pipeline and identify strategies SEAs can implement to help districts develop and sustain effective pipelines. Lastly, we identify specific action principles, resources, and tools that will be valuable to SEAs striving to support a district's turnaround efforts.

In writing this chapter, we reflected on our direct observations and experience consulting with school districts with underperforming schools actively engaged in turnaround efforts. In addition, we interviewed a small but purposeful sample of 14 district leaders, focusing on those who are working effectively for change on behalf of students. Lastly, we bring the perspective of decades of experience consulting in the area of talent management and leadership research with a broad array of organizations, including healthcare, nonprofits, and global corporations. Lessons culled from turnarounds in private enterprise continue to inform our work in public education.

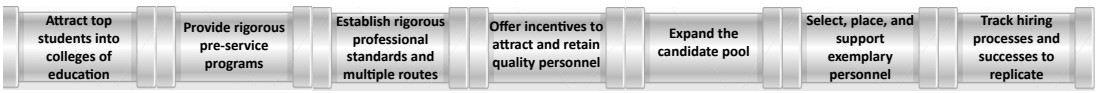
What is a "Talent Pipeline"?

"Talent pipeline" and "leadership pipeline" are terms describing a new area of focus in public education circles nationwide. For instance, they are part of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility waiver application guidance and are the subject of a growing research and policy discussion.

We need to train, recruit, and retain highly skilled leaders and teachers who will have an impact on all of us for generations to come. Framing the potential impact of robust talent pipelines, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said, "if our 95,000 schools each had a great principal, this thing would take care of itself" (2009). The practical reality is that each of our 95,000 schools does not have a great principal. Education is people intensive, yet, when we examine education as a sector, we see little substantive work being done on the people side of the equation.

The need for excellent talent management is particularly acute in situations involving chronically underperforming schools. Frequently, employees believe that they are working hard in the midst of extreme challenges, and their boss has reinforced this perception. They are not having an honest discussion about performance. For instance, we know that many teachers in underperforming schools have received "satisfactory" ratings even though students were not learning; unacceptably low levels of performance are tolerated year after year in many schools (New Teacher Project, 2008). Among organizations in decline and needing to be turned around, Kanter (2003) points to the common organizational pathologies such as "secrecy, blame, isolation, avoidance, passivity, and feelings of helplessness... (that) ...reinforce one another in such a way that the organization enters a kind of death spiral" (p. 4). The supply of leaders in public education that are effective in these situations is quite low, and the stakes are quite high. The earning power of young adults, age 25–34, who do not have a high school diploma is half that of their peers with a college degree (Aud et al., 2011). This is indeed an urgent challenge.

The term "pipeline" comes from talent management practice outside of education. These practices come from the disciplines of organizational behavior and leadership development, having been refined in the business sector. As applied to education, the pipeline includes the elements shown in the diagram below.



Done well, talent pipeline management is an ongoing process, where leadership is continually thinking about how to grow and develop talent at all levels of the organization, both for their current role and their next role. Leadership pays close attention to the current reality of the organization and what will likely unfold in the next five years. They have a clear notion of the sort of leaders needed presently and in the future. There are frequent, candid discussions of performance and potential at all levels. Leaders actively network among sources of talent, keep a pulse on who might be a good fit for their needs, and when they might become available. The organization monitors how many of their critical roles have clear and ready successors and take measures to ensure that the absolute best are retained, and others are allowed to move on.

In a school district, two critical roles need to drive the building of the talent pipeline. One role is the superintendent, who as the leader of the district sets the tone. The second role is the district administrator in charge of human resources (HR), or talent management. The person in this role must be a strong leader and change agent who can shape and mold the culture and behaviors of the human resources function and can challenge their peers in the district to make talent management the top priority for everyone. Reminder: Schools cannot provide a quality education with mediocre teachers or poor leadership, thus talent management IS the top priority.

The SEA can assess the extent to which district leadership has invested in developing a talent pipeline by looking to see if leaders:

- develop personnel at all levels, for their current role and their next role;
- articulate the direction and expectations for personnel that are needed now and for at least the next three years; in effect, they know and discuss their talent strategy;
- engage in frequent, candid discussions of performance and potential at all levels;
- network actively among sources of potential talent;
- know which critical roles have clear successors, ready to take over immediately as needed; and
- know who is at risk of leaving, taking measures to ensure that the absolute best are retained.

The leader sets the direction and the tone through his or her actions. This is not the work of "personnel," but the priority of every leader in the district. For organizations that are managing the pipeline well, a sudden vacancy does not cause panic.

The challenge for the SEA, however, is that the SEA does not directly "manage" school and district operations, except in the most extreme (e.g., takeover) cases. Many educators get involved at the state level to drive large-scale change, only to find that the levers for implementing meaningful change in districts is limited, slow, and blunt. Substantive change that impacts student outcomes needs to become a reality at the district level, as that is where the decisions are made about what happens in the school buildings and the classrooms. This calls for the state to leverage its official authority, as well as its ability to influence beyond its authority, in order for productive changes to be enacted with a sense of urgency.

The SEA and District Talent Pipelines

Multiple states and districts we have worked with have developed unique approaches to developing effective talent management strategies to catalyze turnaround efforts. Some of these have worked well, but some have not worked well. In documenting these approaches, our hope is to highlight promising

strategies and identify potential pitfalls in order to accelerate adoption of intentional talent management practices in districts embarking upon turnaround and in the broader system of public education.

The prerequisite for all of these observations and recommendations is that the SEA has invested in building relationships with district leaders. Most of the district leaders that we have worked with welcome the involvement of the SEA in helping them consider options, deal with tough issues, find funding, research various approaches, and even design systems and processes that will drive fidelity in their talent management practice. They welcome the presence and support of a "trusted advisor."

While some interactions between the SEA and LEA by necessity must focus on monitoring and compliance, the SEA should aim to intentionally foster meaningful dialogue with district leaders actively engaged in school turnaround efforts. Difficult discussions have far more impact if they take place in the context of an established, strong working relationship. In such a relationship, one's technical expertise is less important than one's ability to be a great thought partner (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000). The trusted advisor listens carefully, observes, and seeks to understand the unique needs of the client. This provides the platform for honest and open dialogue that is both critical and supportive. The indicator of success is this: How often and on what topics do district leaders initiate discussions with the SEA?

The District Leader Perspective: What Has Worked, What Has Not

The approaches that SEAs have taken that work especially well for district leaders fall into three broad categories: (1) align state resources to support credentialing and standards including influencing higher education, (2) leverage state resources to benefit all districts, and (3) provide a viewpoint that is strategic. The overarching theme of these is ensuring that all policies, programs, mandates, and efforts contribute to the quality of education for the students that presently reside in the districts and are anticipated to reside there in the future.

State-Level Standards and Credentials

SEAs add unique value to the system in the area of standards. There are two areas in particular where they have direct impact on the talent pipeline for districts: credentialing and overseeing public institutions of higher education (IHEs).

Credentialing Standards

SEAs are responsible for establishing standards (e.g., credentialing requirements) for school leaders and teachers who plan to work in the state. In turn, districts see demonstration of meeting these credentialing standards as a proxy for individuals who have the skills required to be successful.

Establishing rigorous credentialing standards is critical. A district leader we spoke with was most adamant about this, stating "I interview numerous teacher and principal candidates that have been accredited by our state who have no business being in education at all, at any level." Principals and district leaders who are hiring often fall prey to the trap of "I need a teacher in that classroom" and take the best of who is available rather than work for the best for our students.

SEAs can create standards that are challenging to all, yet attainable by the best. These standards need to be meaningful in the way that they drive excellence in the central office and the classroom. This may mean that there is a further shortfall in the supply of personnel for a period of time. The uptick in quality will come as the best job seekers and the best university students get the word that this is a challenging and rewarding profession for bright, high achievers. The incredible competition for acceptance into New Leaders and Teach for America is a clear example of how building a reputation can lead to a greater supply of candidates. We have personally seen this happen at the district level; when the word gets out that there is high-quality implementation in an organization, the best talent flocks to it.

Improving the standards used for hiring and promotion can have a tremendous impact on the talent pool and thus on student outcomes. For example, one new superintendent with whom we worked brought in just two or three key people from other districts to help with the initial "heavy lifting" to put the district in a position to thrive. They immediately began utilizing clear criteria to manage all hiring, promotion, and contract renewal decisions. Within 18 months of assuming the superintendency of the district, he was getting calls from talented teachers and administrators from near and far who wanted to come and work in this district. They had "heard there were great things going on there." As an added bonus, a pool of strong candidates saves districts money, time, and energy because they do not have to contend with a continual churn of unsuccessful hiring.

With standards that are clear and sensible (i.e., they actually drive organizational capacity and positive student outcomes), other possibilities, such as licensing reciprocity among states and alternative paths to licensure. The requirement of full certification or licensure by the state in which the leader or teacher wishes to work can be a significant barrier for many school districts. More specifically, the lack of licensure reciprocity among states limits the opportunity to readily hire personnel who may be highly capable. This is a situation for which remedies should be relatively straightforward to develop and apply where there is a willingness on the part of the SEA to explore new models. Doing so will improve districts' ability to recruit both leaders and teachers. For example, this portability

could increase the pool of teachers as trailing military and corporate spouses/partners could more easily become a part of applicant pools.

While it might be a Herculean task for the 50 states to agree on uniform principal and teacher licensure standards, it seems a manageable task for states to create protocols and monitor their usage. One approach for doing this borrows from the legal profession. Twenty-five states participate in some form of licensure reciprocity. Of these 25, some have reciprocity for all states, while others have it only for nearby states. For example, Idaho offers reciprocity to lawyers licensed in Oregon, Washington, Utah, and Wyoming, while Maine limits reciprocity to attorneys from New Hampshire and Vermont (LaCrosse, 2012).

With the right standards of excellence in place, the above outlined approach can work in public education as follows. When a professional with a certification from another state applies to a school district, the SEA of the state in which the leader or teacher is applying can confirm the licensure and employment record from the peer state agency. SEAs can also include specific texts that document baseline content area skills (e.g., the Praxis series). The district can then confirm the on-the-job competence of the individual through a series of practical activities. When hiring a teacher, these activities may include:

- creation of a lesson plan
- observation of a lesson
- structured interviews with clearly defined rating scales
- manipulation and derivation of conclusions from a mock data set
- written and oral responses to a case study

SEAs can aid districts by conducting the initial screening for baseline content requirements, creating a repository of materials that can be drawn from depending on the district's needs, and providing technical assistance in choosing the right instruments and administering them. SEAs can also lead in setting up the process and standards for reciprocity, with the goal of keeping the standards high and not slipping to the lowest common denominator.

In addition to ensuring greater licensure portability, SEAs can make alternative teacher certification programs available and provide tools to assist districts in screening leaders attracted from other fields. The pool of candidates with specific skills needed for the future may not have enough depth if only candidates with education degrees are considered.

Public education has the potential to be attractive to large segments of qualified people who could add value to the sector. For instance, professionals who retire with 20-30 years of service in a particular industry are frequently still interested in working and can bring tremendous depth of experience. Still others seek career changes at the midpoint. Education represents a very rewarding possibility for professionals who want to make a difference. Classroom teaching, obviously, and other positions, such as human resources leader or finance leader

in the district, would benefit from a professional from that field in the role, not simply the veteran principal who needs a job.

Supervising Institutions of Higher Education

The second area related to talent management where an SEA can effectively leverage its responsibilities is schools of education. The SEA must utilize its authority and influence to ensure that the institutions of higher education (IHEs) are indeed that—institutions of higher learning. Following functional high credentialing standards, this is a critical point in leveraging the talent pipeline to improve the quality of education in the state. Do not take this for granted. One private foundation focused on education improvement analyzed data from their state university school of education and discovered it was accepting students that were predominantly from the bottom third of their high school graduating classes. Four years later, a disproportionate number of those students were graduating from the school of education with highest honors. Reflecting the research, we have frequently heard the complaint that new teachers are not arriving equipped for the work required in today's classrooms (Auguste, Kihn, & Miller, 2010). Working with state universities and colleges to ensure that the curriculum and faculty are up to date and the courses are rigorous is leveraging one of the greatest opportunities for children in the state.

Bringing together the accountability of IHEs with the previously mentioned licensing reciprocity and finding ways to make hiring high-quality leaders and teachers from out of the state more accessible (revisit and revise reciprocity policies) will elevate the competition for local colleges and universities to produce better graduates. It breaks their perceived monopoly on the talent pool.

Leverage State Resources to the Benefit of All Districts

The SEA can minimize districts' workloads by finding ways to leverage resources for all of districts, statewide. Specifically, the SEA can leverage economies of scale by (1) identifying approaches or products that the state is willing to support, and (2) coordinating the design/build of systems or processes that benefit all districts in the state.

Identifying approaches or products that the state will support is essentially "prequalifying" key resources for the districts, such as curricula, professional development offerings, and various consulting services. Many benefits accrue from applying this approach: the districts save time, money, and energy as the state brings other resources to the opportunity; the students benefit, as the possibility for securing the highest quality approach improves; and the SEA strengthens credibility by bringing together experts, vendors, state resources, and district leaders for a broader and more inclusive approach to the decision. The link to talent pipeline is that the SEA can help identify consulting services, especially talent management consulting and leadership development, that are effective and generate improved outcomes. The SEA can also investigate

alternatives and products that support talent pipeline development, such as interviewing processes (e.g., Behavioral Event Interviews) or hiring criteria that aid in objectively identifying the best candidate for positions in the districts. We have observed that most districts are doing the best they can, but feel as though they are "winging it" when it comes to interviewing and selection practices. One such opportunity for improvement that we see frequently would be to more explicitly define clear criteria for hiring or promoting someone to be the head of human resources, given that it is the second most critical role in developing robust talent pipelines in any district.

Coordinating the design and build of systems or processes has tremendous potential to support talent pipeline development. The SEA can devote energy, expertise, and relationships to coordinate the many parties involved to develop something that is then offered to the districts for their use. For instance, Ohio has successfully taken this approach with its performance appraisal system for teachers and administrators. The Ohio Department of Education devoted significant resources to developing the systems that districts are then able to adopt, rather than each district creating their own systems. No one district would have been able to fund this system, and the support in implementing it has been well-received. The state coordinated the design with district input, invested in building of the actual system, and also supported the roll out by providing training on the use of the new system. This system has a direct impact on pipeline development as it prioritizes appraising the strengths and opportunities for critical resources: teachers and their leadership.

Leveraging a Broad Perspective

Unlike most districts, the SEA has the benefit of broad perspective. Seeing the bigger picture, knowing how things operate at the state level, gathering information trends and developments that impact public education—these are all invaluable aspects of being a strong thought partner with district leaders. Giving district leaders the "excuse" to have time in the calendar to look up and look forward by meeting with their trusted SEA can be helpful to the district leader mired in the day-to-day operation of their district. Particular to building talent pipelines, there may be any number of places that the SEA can allocate their resources in this regard: providing technical assistance for recruiting and selecting; providing forums for functional areas necessary to support high-quality education; and providing districts insight and perspective on data and information pertinent to their mandate.

Provide Technical Assistance for Recruitment and Selection

Based on our experience working with dozens of highly successful organizations, the education community at all levels draws from too narrow a talent pool. For instance, with a very traditional educator training approach and few professional-level, work-related experiences outside of the realm of education,

everyone hails from very similar educational and professional backgrounds (Hess & Kelly, 2007). The SEA can provide innovation and insight in this realm that may provide the needed breakthrough to staffing key positions.

Recruitment

One significant change that is absolutely essential in education is to enact more proactive and creative ways to recruit new teachers and leaders. The most proactive organizations get tremendous clarity on what their needs will be in the short, mid, and long term, and they actively seek talent to help meet those needs. Districts have relied for too long on a reactive stance, placing ads and participating in job fairs, hoping to create a decent applicant pool. A more aggressive approach to recruiting is necessary to create a healthier, high-quality applicant pool. The SEA can provide districts with technical assistance focusing on the following priorities:

1. Forge relationships with national/regional organizations to meet particular staffing needs. For example, districts may need more Native American teachers. SEAs can create ongoing relationships with Native American colleges and universities and Native American lobbying groups such as the National Congress of American Indians.
2. Help districts find teachers with broad cultural competence. SEAs can network and develop relationships with the military, the Peace Corps, U.S. State Department alumni and their immediate families, AmeriCorps, and other groups. Trailing military spouses, retired U.S. State Department employees, the adult children of U.S. State Department employees, former Peace Corps and AmeriCorps volunteers are all great sources of people who meet the needs of the districts, especially those needs that are most difficult to "train." Seek out people who are accustomed to interacting with people of different cultures and living under challenging circumstances.
3. Develop workshops and tools for districts to help them manage turnover. In today's talent marketplace, the expectation that educators will remain educators or with a single district for many years is unrealistic, and policies based on this assumption hinder districts' talent pipeline efforts. Districts must seek out and hire the most qualified candidates and prepare for turnover. SEAs can help districts factor this into their standard operating procedures and their expectations.

Selection

Teacher and administrator selection is another area in which the SEA can be helpful. Many of the same tools and techniques that can be used for confirming competence for state licensure can be offered for selection. Many districts, especially smaller districts, do not have human resources professionals in their human resources departments. Instead, administrators have been asked to take

on a role for which they have limited, if any, practical experience. Their ability to create valid selection instruments, including rating scales, is certainly limited. Where districts are unable to have professional staff working in these areas, states can provide needed technical assistance.

Providing Forums for Function Areas

An SEA typically develop standards and credentialing requirements for district and school leaders and instructional personnel. However, it does not typically develop standards for other key function areas (e.g., human resources or business managers). While we are not advocating that states usurp local decision making, an SEA can leverage its collective expertise to provide guidance regarding skills and competencies in these function areas that can help guide and inform district hiring procedures.

For instance, a district we worked with in Ohio had the opportunity to hire a new leader for human resources/talent management. They knew at the state level there were groups and support mechanisms for curriculum and instruction, professional learning communities, budgeting and finance, school board training, nutrition, and even transportation. There was absolutely nothing in the way of guidance and support for human resource and talent management issues. There was not even a "best practices" meeting, conference, webinar, or white paper. There was no resource in place to guide a major urban district in finding and selecting their new human resources leader and no group to support and guide whomever they decided to hire.

Education leaders across the country will readily say that "we are only as good as our people," yet talent management is the one item that tends to be forgotten. An SEA can ensure that there are such resources, particularly at the state level, for human resources/talent management professionals in public education.

Providing Data and Information: Making Connections for District Leaders

Utilizing readily available electronic data, an SEA can reduce districts' administrative burden or provide information that smaller districts would never have the manpower to access. One such data source is the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) census comparator tool with which districts can compare their demographic makeup with that of other districts in other states. Such data allows for networking and sharing of resources and best practices. For example, if the SEA can determine a reasonable pool of comparator districts, their district clients can conduct more targeted, focused, rapid benchmarking research. Once a district has a valid comparator group, they can share successful strategies in talent management, for example.

Of course, the foundation for this type of action is to begin to think and act beyond the "typical" boundaries of the SEA. Another possibility, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is to look at the data regarding where the most effective teachers are coming from and share that data with districts and IHEs.

Conclusion

The SEA is uniquely positioned to influence credentialing policies, invest resources that individual districts cannot, and leverage a broader, more strategic perspective in order to encourage and support development of robust talent pipelines. Any of these areas that we have highlighted in this discussion is a serious challenge in most states. Each of these presupposes that the state and the districts have a clear direction or strategy that informs all decisions. Utilizing that direction or strategic plan to prioritize goals and focus resources is the critical step as the SEA embarks on any identified initiative, but doing one thing well is better for students than doing four things poorly.

In a system where each jurisdiction, no matter how small, has been vested with the awesome responsibility of setting the foundation for the life's course of every child, few things should be more powerful than a talent management partnership with a larger entity with greater resources. Identifying, recruiting, and selecting the right leaders and instructional personnel for a given place and situation and ensuring that the right skills and talent are brought to bear on each situation are efforts requiring proactive methods and real expertise in talent management.

The leader at the top of the district must be passionate about talent. In turn, the human resources leader must be skilled as a human resources professional, not simply as an administrator. An SEA must first build relationships that go beyond compliance and monitoring with district leaders so they can serve as trusted advisors and support, reinforce, and enable district leadership to develop and sustain effective talent pipelines for both school leaders and instructional personnel. Given that the power of the SEA is less direct and authority stems from how effectively the SEA builds relationships that empower others to do their jobs most effectively, relationships are critical to SEA's being able to effectively assist LEAs.

The SEA knows that this is happening when there is clear evidence that district leadership:

- develops personnel at all levels, for their current role and their next role;
- articulates the direction and expectations for personnel that are needed now and for at least the next three years;
- engages in frequent, candid discussions of performance and potential at all levels;
- networks actively among sources of potential talent;
- knows which critical roles have clear successors, ready to take over immediately as needed; and
- knows who is at risk of leaving, taking measures to ensure that the absolute best are retained.

SEAs are in a strong position to allocate key resources and provide districts with expertise and advocacy to get the right people in the right roles and doing the right things for students.

Action Principles

Talent pipeline management is an ongoing process and essential to sustainable school turnaround efforts. Key actions SEAs can take to support the development of robust talent pipelines include:

Review relevant policies

- Revisit and revise, if necessary, credentialing standards and processes and ensure they reflect what teachers and leaders need to know to be successful.
- Examine reciprocity policies to address barriers to teachers crossing state lines to work.

Allocate resources to support development of systems essential to talent pipelines

- Develop and disseminate practical talent management tools and procedures.
- Drive economies of scale through SEA-level research, identification, and coordination around talent pipeline management processes, systems, and tools that will be helpful for districts with limited capability to develop them individually.

Provide focused technical assistance

- Provide recruitment and selection support building on best practices from outside of public education.
- Provide forums for talent management discussions and support across districts.

Be an objective partner

- Help district leaders look at the direction for their district.
- Supply districts with data and information pertinent to their mandate, including insights from similar districts in your state and other states.

Talent Pipeline Resources

Block, P. (2000). *Flawless consulting: A guide to getting your expertise used* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

A very pragmatic look at the helping relationship, including the phases and pitfalls of making that work well.

Charan, R., & Conaty, B. (2010). *The talent masters: Why smart leaders put people before numbers*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing.

An in-depth and very readable look at four organizations that work hard at their talent pipelines for significant results.

Cooperider, D. L., & Whitney, D. (2005). *Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Cooperider puts forward a strategy for organization and community involvement, including examples and approaches.

Liedtka, J., & Ogilvie, T. (2011). *Designing for growth: A design thinking tool kit for managers*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Liedtka provides practical insight on how to go about designing systems and processes and how to involve the ultimate user of those systems and processes.

Maister, D. H., Green, C. H., & Galford, R. M. (2000). *The trusted advisor*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

This book emphasizes the importance of earning the trust and confidence of one's clients. It discusses that technical mastery, while fundamental, is not what allows for truly fruitful interactions.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

If you want to go deep on how organizations work and how culture is formed and changed, this is a great place to start.

References

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). *The condition of education 2011* (NCES 2011–033). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Augusts, B., Kihn, P., & Miller, M. (2010, September). *Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to careers in teaching. An international and market research-based perspective*. New York, NY: McKinsey & Company.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Number of jobs held, labor market activity, and earnings growth among the youngest baby boomers: Results from a longitudinal survey*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). *Solving the dilemmas of teacher supply, demand, and standards: How we can ensure a competent, caring, and qualified teacher for every child*. New York, NY: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Duncan, A. (2009, May). *Education leadership: An agenda for school improvement*. Remarks delivered at The Wallace Foundation's National Conference on Education Leadership, Washington, DC.

Hess, F. M., & Kelly, A. P. (2007, January). Learning to lead? What gets taught in principal preparation programs. *Teachers College Record, 109*(1), 244–274.

Ingersoll, R. (2002, June). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin, 86*, 16–31.

Ingersoll, R. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*, 499–534.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2003, September). *Is there really a teacher shortage*? Seattle, WA: University of Washington/Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

Kanter, R. M. (2003). Leadership and the psychology of turnarounds. *Harvard Business Review, 81*(6), 58–67.

LaCrosse, N. (2012). *Reciprocity laws among the states*. Retrieved from http://www.lawcrossing.com/article/1084/Reciprocity-Laws-Among-the-States/

Maister, D. H., Green, C. H., & Galford, R. M. (2000). *The trusted advisor*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (n.d.) *Evaluation*. Retrieved from http://nctaf.org/research/evaluation/

Public Law 107–110—Jan. 8, 2002. No Child Left Behind Act of 2011. 107th Congress. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107–110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).

The State's Role in Supporting Data Use to Drive School Turnaround

Daniel Player, Michael Kight, and William Robinson

The intensive care unit (ICU) of a hospital cares for patients whose medical conditions place them in serious and immediate danger and therefore are in critical need of specialized medical attention and constant support. Upon arrival, each patient is given an individualized plan for treatments and outcomes and begins a regimen of constant monitoring to measure their progress against those plans. Every patient is connected to several automatic sensors monitoring their vital signs and raising immediate warnings if necessary. Specially trained critical care doctors and nurses closely monitor patient data for indications of recovery or any potential signs of danger. They also visit the patients regularly to assess their progress and adjust treatments if necessary. All interactions are carefully documented so all who work with the patient can see the complete treatment history and prognosis for recovery based on the recovery plan. With constant monitoring and personalized attention, ICU patients have a much greater chance to recover and thrive.

The roles of monitoring and data use are clear and intuitive in the scenario of an ICU. The patients there are in a precarious medical situation and must receive quick and appropriate intervention if their condition changes or fails to progress in an expected way. If an ICU were to only conduct occasional cursory tests, such as checking body temperature and blood pressure, the results could be disastrous. If the results of monitoring were only available several days or weeks after they were taken, it would often be much too late to intervene. Similarly, if doctors and nurses failed to share information from shift to shift, it would be impossible to monitor the patient's progress, creating information gaps and the potential for warning signs to be missed. Indeed, monitoring and data analysis are among the

top priorities of a successful ICU. Studies have confirmed that close adherence to established care processes are significantly correlated with hospital quality (Peterson et al., 2006).

Every public school district[1] in the United States has at least some students, and often entire schools, in need of intensive educational care. While it is difficult to imagine a medical ICU that does not closely monitor its patients, it is unfortunately common for a school, district, and state to let close monitoring and analysis of its struggling students, teachers, schools, or districts take a back seat to the many other responsibilities they have. However, if they hope to see improvement, states must expect districts to conduct themselves as educational ICUs and make individual student monitoring, data analysis, and data-driven action a priority in an "ongoing cycle of instructional improvement" (Hamilton et al., 2009, p. 10). The doctors and nurses of our turnaround schools are the principals and teachers who have the responsibility to carry out much of the monitoring and analysis of a wide range of outcomes and metrics. However, they cannot do it effectively without the proper tools and support provided to them by the district and state. Thus, the whole system has a key role in the provision of this intensive care.

In this chapter, we make the case that monitoring and data use is a critical foundation of any school turnaround. We offer a perspective on the possibilities for comprehensive data use at all levels and share some practical advice for states and districts on how to use data to improve decisions in a variety of contexts. We draw on the expertise gleaned from the experiences of the University of Virginia's Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE)[2] in our work with over 200 schools in dozens of school districts across the country as well as the best practices documented in the evolving literature on effective school turnarounds (Calkins, Guenthen, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007; Duke, n.d.; Hassel & Hassel, 2008; Herman et al., 2008; Player & Katz, 2013; Steiner, Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009)

For the purposes of this document, we use the term data to denote a wide array of progress indicators. Student diagnostic, formative, and interim assessment data is clearly the most critical component of a data portfolio. However, effective data use goes beyond test scores to capture other academic and behavioral outcomes such as course completion, discipline, attendance, and graduation and professional performance indicators for each teacher, school, and district. Together, a rich data system paints a full picture of the health of the education system in a state.

[1]When we reference "district" throughout this chapter, our recommendations apply not only to traditional "LEAs" but also to non-traditional districts and charter management organizations—any entity that oversees multiple schools.

[2]The PLE sponsors the School Turnaround Specialist Program (STSP), which has operated since 2003 to work with schools and districts to turn around persistently low-performing schools in a variety of settings. The STSP emphasizes organizational improvement at the district level to support school turnaround. More information can be found http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/darden-curry-ple/

Building a Structure to Foster Data Use

"Data rich and information poor" is a phrase a seasoned principal used to describe his district's situation as they began a turnaround partnership with the PLE. The district was gathering large amounts of data on a number of metrics. However, after collection it went largely unused by anyone at the district or school level. Unfortunately, this is a common situation in many districts that embark on turnaround efforts. Federal and state initiatives ensure that data are being collected on a whole host of student and teacher outcomes. In fact, a recent federal report found nearly all districts have electronic student information systems, and 70% have had them for at least 6 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). However, the data are often poorly organized, difficult to access, based on lagging indicators, misaligned with curriculum, and generally misunderstood. As a result, the data are collected, reported as required for compliance, and then forgotten. This effort comes at a great expense in terms of time and resources, and states and districts begin to view themselves as data collectors and compliance monitors rather than informed data users. Data by itself is nothing extraordinary. What is extraordinary is building a collaborative culture that embraces data as an efficient and effective tool for continual improvement rather than an additional burden to bear.

To address this "data rich and information poor" culture, states must first lead by example in modeling effective data use. Likewise, they must provide the resources and training to ensure data use is embedded in districts and schools in such a way that it becomes an inseparable part of the culture. To do this well, these organizations must analyze and respond to the data at all levels. District leaders must implement a system that enhances their understanding of what is working at a student, teacher, and school level and use this information to help administrators and teachers improve instruction. The state's greatest lever of influence over this district practice will be to provide the necessary resources and supports, model or highlight promising practice, monitor implementation, and hold districts accountable. Ultimately, states should monitor not only the summative performance of schools, akin to monitoring the mortality rates of hospitals, but more importantly, monitor and support districts in setting up systems that foster effective ongoing data use to prevent tragic outcomes for students. For the remainder of this chapter, we summarize the elements that are most important in building a culture of data use and how states can support their districts in implementation.

- Set clear expectations that data must be used to monitor progress and make instructional decisions.
- Provide rigorous common interim assessments that accurately capture learning objectives and provide specific post-assessment formative data.

- Provide a robust data system that captures data from a variety of student outcomes and school climate, is easily accessed, and presents results in a clear and intuitive way.
- Encourage structured time for collaboration and analysis in the annual calendar to make data-informed teacher and student plans in response to interim assessments and include time in the weekly schedule to have data meetings.
- Deliver ongoing professional development that builds the capacity to analyze and respond to data effectively and is flexible to adapt to student learning needs.
- Build data-driven leadership capacity by requiring principal preparation programs to include courses on data-driven instruction, assessments, and data literacy.
- Pursue embedded follow-up to ensure school and teacher leaders receive regular, tailored coaching, feedback, and accountability.

Set Clear Expectations

The state's most important role in data use is to establish a clear expectation that data will be used to guide instruction and to monitor teacher performance. State leaders have an essential, irreplaceable role in influencing district practice. By being strategic in framing the importance of data-driven practice, establishing what evidence of district-level and school-level data-driven practice it expects to see, providing funds and guidance to support the achievement of these practices, and ensuring clear lines of communication, state leaders can be catalysts for action and change. States should use the levers available to them in a manner that conveys collaborative intent and sets the tone for continued, data-driven improvement.

Provide Rigorous Common Interim Assessments

The current assessment approach of many states and districts fails to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students. In many scenarios, high-quality, common interim assessments are not used to measure short-term student progress. Rather, districts and states rely on the annual state assessment and/or vendor-provided predictive/adaptive assessments to monitor student progress. However, we have found that both of these approaches are insufficient for a number of reasons. Often, state summative results are not available until several months after the end of the school year. By that time, it is too late for the teacher or school to use the data to address student deficiencies. The results from these assessments are commonly referred to as "Autopsy Reports," as they arrive after the student has already failed. A slightly better approach is the use of predictive assessments that measure progress on the entire year's curriculum based on 30

to 50 questions.[3] While these assessments may gauge a student's performance level compared to his or her peers, they do not provide the detailed information a teacher requires to create a thorough learning plan for an individual student or small groups of students.

Although regular formative (or "short-cycle"), literacy, and other types of assessment data are useful, rigorous interim assessments best provide district and state leaders with a strategic intervention point, or leading indicator, to reliably understand if progress is being made and teachers with an objective mechanism to monitor retained learning. To fully leverage interim assessments, teachers and administrators must have access to user-friendly feedback reports that provide specific standard question and student-level analysis that can aid in determining the areas of mastery and deficiency. For example, the assessments might identify the students in the class who could not correctly answer computation questions that involved adding and subtracting fractions. Receiving this type of detailed information in a timely manner allows the teacher to assess the root cause of the deficiency by analyzing the types of mistakes students made and then immediately adjusting future instruction in response. Teachers could then devote class time to re-teaching addition and subtraction of fractions to the entire class, a targeted group of students, or an individual when appropriate.

States must be willing to provide districts and schools with the tools and types of assessments that generate the detailed performance data needed to monitor students' academic health. Just as an ICU must monitor progress and adjust care on a frequent basis using state of the art equipment, educators must have access to interim assessments that accurately and precisely measure students' academic situations and reflect teachers' efforts to improve student learning on a recurrent basis.

Some would argue that the creation and use of interim assessments ought to be left to the discretion of the districts, schools, and teachers. However, this approach is akin to an ICU leaving patient monitoring entirely to the discretion of the doctors and nurses. While doctors and nurses are experts in treatment and patient care, it would be clearly beyond the scope of their expertise to be expected to devise all of the necessary techniques and equipment required to monitor patient health. It would also be inefficient to rely on each doctor and nurse to independently develop his or her own monitoring system for every patient. Instead, the hospital establishes clear protocols and provides the health care specialists with the tools they need to follow those protocols and leverage their expertise. Like ICU medical equipment, high-quality assessments undergo extensive pilot testing and refinement to ensure they accurately measure what they purport to measure. States can experience efficiency and quality gains by providing districts and schools with professionally created diagnostic

[3]We recommend instead cumulative assessments that measure performance against only standards covered to date.

assessments, common formative assessments, and supplemental assessment question banks aligned to the state's curriculum. Districts can leverage these high-quality assessments or question banks to create interims adapted to their instructional sequence and more formative, short-cycle assessments to allow them to continuously monitor student learning.

From a resource perspective, it is more efficient for the state to identify and continuously monitor high-quality assessments from a seemingly endless sea of options rather than expecting each district to do it independently.[4] It also sends the signal to districts about the importance the state places on using resources for assessments well. As an example of how this worked in practice, the state department of education in one southwestern U.S. state recently investigated interim assessment vendors to gauge their alignment with the state learning objectives and to assess the specificity of the formative post-assessment data provided to teachers and leaders. After identifying three vendors that sufficiently met these criteria, the state informed districts with low-performing schools that they would pay for assessments from any of these three vendors if the district chose to use them. The message was clear that districts and schools would be held responsible to use some form of interim assessment to guide instruction.

Provide Access to a Robust Data Collection System With Clear Outputs

An effective data system will provide a consistent repository for student-level assessment results that link teachers to students, including detailed interim assessment results and state assessment results for at least the previous two years. The system will also include program data, such as what types of classes the students are taking and any special services the students receive, as well as attendance data, discipline records, age, and other demographic information that might be relevant in making proactive academic plans for students and classes. The development of an integrated data collection system is not trivial and requires thoughtful execution (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The student data must be easily accessible and interpretable by teachers and principals and include student-level progress indicators in multiple areas over multiple years. Ideally, educators should be able to log on and view the data any time they need it, or they will be unlikely to use it. Users also benefit from professional development and guided practice on how to use reports as they begin to incorporate them into their planning and course development.

Many districts do not have access to a student information system that provides the data necessary to improve student achievement. A case study of a Texas district confirmed that the usability of the student information system was the biggest deterrent to data use (Wayman, Cho, & Johnston, 2007). A school or

[4]If a district has the capacity to identify or develop a suitable assessment system that is aligned with standards, the state should be open to learning from their efforts. Some larger districts may have capacity to develop high-quality interims, but typically these are lower quality than the market provides, and this discrepancy will increase as more rigorous, common core alignment is needed.

district can collect and provide rich and useful data, but if it is not presented in an integrated way and in a format that is easy to digest and interpret, it will likely be underused. Such efficient, longitudinal reporting provides educators the data to hypothesize the root cause of student's needs prior to the start of the school year and prevents them from having to sift through multiple reports to understand a student's academic and behavioral needs and progression.

Even when districts manage to secure funding to procure such a system, it often lacks interoperability with other district- and state-level data systems, limiting usability, accuracy, and overall efficiency. This can be especially frustrating for districts with a transient student population. All too often, instructional time is lost and educational services are not provided due to student being inappropriately placed as the receiving school awaits a printed copy of the student's cumulative records or transcripts. State education agencies could correct this imperfection by working with districts to ensure state and local data systems are interconnected. If a student transfers from one district to another within the state, the receiving district should be able to access the state's data system to view the student's longitudinal assessment, program, and demographic data on the first day of enrollment. Even if a state is not ready to provide an interconnected system, it should provide technical assistance to help ensure districts choose robust and effective data systems.

Developing a statewide data system that can effectively collect data from school and district data systems to track student and teacher data on a statewide basis can also foster a culture of data use. As schools and districts develop sophisticated data systems, it is important that the state stay ahead of the tide and have a system that can be ready to receive the influx of new data and use it accordingly. States will also find it advantageous to use this new system to monitor the composition of the teacher workforce and student population to anticipate future demand and supply.

Encourage Districts to Create Structured Time for Collaboration and Analysis

District calendars and daily school schedules are often tight and allow little discretionary time for data analysis. If time is not explicitly reserved for assessments, data analysis, and action planning, then it will not take hold. At the district level, annual calendars should include specific times to administer interim assessments and time for teachers to analyze and formulate individual plans to address class-wide and student-level needs based on their results, including additional time following major assessments (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). Having a dedicated time on the calendar ensures that schools recognize data use as a priority.

Effective turnaround schools must regularly analyze and respond to data on student learning including both assessments and student work. To accomplish this, districts that work with the University of Virginia's School Turnaround

Specialist Program are encouraged to have turnaround schools set aside a minimum of 90 minutes of uninterrupted time each week for teachers to attend collaborative data team meetings (Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997). These 90-minute meetings, attended by teams of teachers either within a grade level or content area, must be a regular part of each school's master schedule, and districts must provide ongoing support and accountability to ensure this time is used effectively. Additionally, as interim and critical common short-cycle assessments are completed, district calendars should include built-in time to examine new data points and make adjustments as indicated by the evidence.

In a PLE partner state, the number one goal of the state board of education is to support accountability for all public schools by establishing policies that help schools increase the academic success of all students, especially those who are at-risk or in underperforming school systems. To achieve this goal, this state, like many others, has passed education policies that mandate school year start and end dates, the minimum number of yearly instructional hours, the required number of teacher work days, remediation classes for students, intervention requirements for schools, and many other strategies. However, we have not yet worked in a state with policies that mandate the minimum number of minutes required for collaborative teacher meeting time or incentivized scheduling changes that prioritize collaboration that results in data-based instructional action. This critical instructional infrastructure lever is typically left to the discretion of the individual school administrator and is generally treated as an afterthought when creating the school master schedule. Mandated instructional hours and remediation courses will not have the expected impact on student achievement if schools do not provide the structured collaborative meeting time to allow teachers the opportunity to work together to analyze student achievement data, create teacher action plans, and develop and review intervention strategies.

Deliver Ongoing Professional Development and Support Aligned to the Districts' Data-Driven Instructional Needs

Data-driven instruction and school turnaround cannot be accomplished using only a bottom-up approach. Focused attention on individual schools, with little to no improvements and enforced expectations at the district level, will not produce sustainable turnaround. Based on our experience working with turnaround schools, we focus our energy on the roles and responsibilities of the district leaders. For example, districts that work with the PLE send district leaders to a four-day executive education boot camp designed to prepare them to establish an instructional infrastructure with valid assessments, responsive data systems, and a high-quality curriculum with corresponding instructional strategies to meet student needs, along with many other important levers in turnaround.

State education agencies play a key role in building the district and school leaders' capacity to help them learn to use the data available and coach teachers

to adjust their instruction in response to it. This is particularly important when states embark on a new initiative such as the common core. It ultimately will not make a significant difference if teachers have access to higher quality assessments and rigorous common core curriculum and are provided with more collaboration time unless district and school leaders know how to support and monitor collaboration time and instructional action plans to ensure instructional approaches are adapted based on evidence and individual student needs. State support can come in the form of general support, such as statewide professional development, or in embedded support based on the needs of individual districts. Based on the responses of some schools, embedded data coaches who specialize in interpreting student data have been reported as being more useful than general professional development around data use (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The provision of data coaches or other efforts to prioritize data-based capacity, however, is likely to occur only if the district or state provides structural and financial support for the effort.

Make Additional Efforts to Build Data-Driven Leadership Capacity

Data use among school leaders is a critical component to building a culture of data use (Hamilton et al., 2009). Leaders can effectively use data to recognize the relative strengths and weaknesses of their schools and teachers and to make midcourse corrections to address major areas of concern. Just as teachers can better address student needs with data that allows them to make preventive course corrections, leaders can better support teacher needs with a data-driven mindset. Leaders will also find it advantageous to collect data beyond just student assessment scores in order to better identify potential teacher challenges. For example, if data on walk-through observations, teacher absences, and a teacher's prior effectiveness are well-organized and combined with achievement data, leaders can make more informed decisions, anticipate needs, and tailor coaching.

States must do a better job requiring principal preparation programs to better prepare their graduates for the current era of accountability. A study of 56 principal preparation programs found that less than 5% of the course weeks addressed instruction on managing school improvement via data, technology, or empirical research (Hess & Andrews, 2005). States are in a position to provide guidance, and perhaps appropriate incentives, to the credentialing organizations within their states to develop courses that address this need. Changing practices in universities is often difficult due to the internal obstacles created by the universities themselves. However, we believe that this change can happen if state and university leaders would work together to redesign their current programs based on lessons learned from the field.

Provide Embedded Follow-Up

A state education leader might only have the capacity to visit his or her lowest-performing schools once a year. Many times, these visits help maintain professional relationships and establish an aligned presence but are limited in direct impact. The key to effective state education leadership is to impact practice at the district level by developing collaborative, trusting interactions at the district level, monitoring implementation of best practices, and holding district leaders accountable. Improving and maximizing these ongoing visits can be an impactful leverage point for the state. We recommend that states monitor and support district efforts to improve their key data levers: assessments, curriculum, data system, calendar, data-based professional development, embedded follow-up, and evidence-based decision making.

Conclusion

Returning to our metaphor of turnaround schools as ICUs, patient recovery does not typically occur by chance. It is the culmination of careful, deliberate, and immediate treatment in response to the patient's real-time condition. None of this is possible without accurate monitoring and analysis. In the same way, a state cannot expect a turnaround school to experience marked improvement if teachers and leaders are not carefully monitoring the progress of students and adjusting instruction based on immediate needs. Their ability to do so, however, hinges in large part upon the state's ability to provide the necessary resources and direction that impact district practice.

The culture of data use begins at the top, with states modeling effective practices for how and when data are to be used. As states emphasize the importance of demonstrating progress and results, districts will recognize the need to be monitoring progress among their schools. When districts begin to catch this vision, they will see the importance of providing their schools with the tools, support, and professional development necessary to ensure that data use is happening on the ground. When teachers begin to see data use as a way to provide them with greater instructional support, the students in our lowest performing schools will begin to see steady improvement.

State Leader Action Principles

Set clear expectations and model effective use of data

- Clearly establish the expectation that data will be used to guide instruction and to monitor student and teacher performance.
- Identify specific metrics to assess district performance and track school turnaround efforts to model effective data use.

Provide rigorous common interim assessments and/or question banks to create assessments, and ensure districts administer them every six to nine weeks

- Screen for assessments and questions aligned to the state curricula with appropriate rigor, similar in format as the state assessment, and cumulative based on standards taught up to the time of administration.
- Ensure districts adapt curriculum and assessments to align with pacing guides.
- Ensure results are returned to districts in a user-friendly format that allows teachers to complete an item analysis within 48 hours after administration.

Provide access to a robust data collection system that produces clear outputs

- Design district and state student information systems to be interconnected.
- Screen for robust data systems that provide detailed longitudinal interim and state assessment results that are connected to the names of the students' current and previous teachers. Systems should also include program, demographic, attendance, and behavioral data that might be relevant in making proactive academic plans for students and classes.
- Ensure district student information systems produce clear outputs and are easily accessed by school administrators and teachers.

Encourage districts to create structured time for collaboration and analysis

- Ensure teachers have a minimum of 90 minutes of uninterrupted, structured collaborative meeting time each week to work together to analyze student achievement data, create teacher action plans, and develop and review intervention strategies.
- Provide teachers with additional time after common interim assessments to make rigorous instructional plans based on the data.
- Revisit requirements related to school days and hours to provide districts with greater flexibility and, thus, ability to creatively establish collaboration time.

Provide professional development and support aligned to the districts' data-driven instructional needs

- Ensure district leaders establish common expectations for data use in their schools.
- Provide the necessary capacity-building support to districts and, when relevant, school leaders, to help them build capacity of teachers to use data to drive instruction.
- Provide ongoing professional development to all district leaders and construct embedded support based on the needs of each district.

Make additional efforts to build data-driven leadership capacity

- Require principal preparation programs to include additional courses on data-driven instruction, assessments, and data literacy.
- Work with university leaders to redesign principal preparation programs based on lessons learned from the field.
- Offer incentives, such as grants, to encourage colleges and universities to develop stronger data courses for teachers and administrators.

Provide embedded follow-up and explicit means of accountability

- Impact district practice by developing collaborative, trusting interactions at the district level, monitoring implementation of best practices, and holding district leaders accountable.
- Set up clear means to track district data use, and hold districts accountable for developing and utilizing effective data systems.

References

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2010). *Driven by data: A practical guide to improve instruction*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Calkins, A., Genther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The turnaround challenge.* Boston, MA: Mass Insight. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/51/file/1/pubs/2010/04/15/TheTurnaroundChallenge_MainReport.pdf

Duke, D. (n.d.). *Keys to sustaining successful school turnaround*. Unpublished manuscript, Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education, Charlottesville, VA. Retrieved from http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/uploadedFiles/Darden/Darden_Curry_PLE/UVA_School_Turnaround/KeysToSuccess.pdf

Hamilton, L., Halverson, R., Jackson, S. S., Mandinach, E., Supovitz, J. A., & Wayman, J. C. (2009). *Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making*. (NCEE 2009–4067). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides

Hess, F., & Andrews, P. (2005). Learning to lead: What gets taught in principal-preparation programs. *Teachers College Review, 109*(1), 244–274. Retrieved from http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/Hess_Kelly_Learning_to_Lead_PEPG05.02.pdf

Kowal, J., Hassel, E. A., & Hassel, B. C. (2009). *Successful school turnarounds: Seven steps for district leaders*. Washington, DC: Learning Point. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefSept09.pdf

Peterson, E., Roe, M., Mulgund, J., DeLong, E., Lytle, B., Brindis, R.,…Ohman, M. (2006). Association between hospital process performance and outcomes among patients with acute coronary syndromes. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 295*(16), 1912–1920. doi:10.1001/jama.295.16.1912

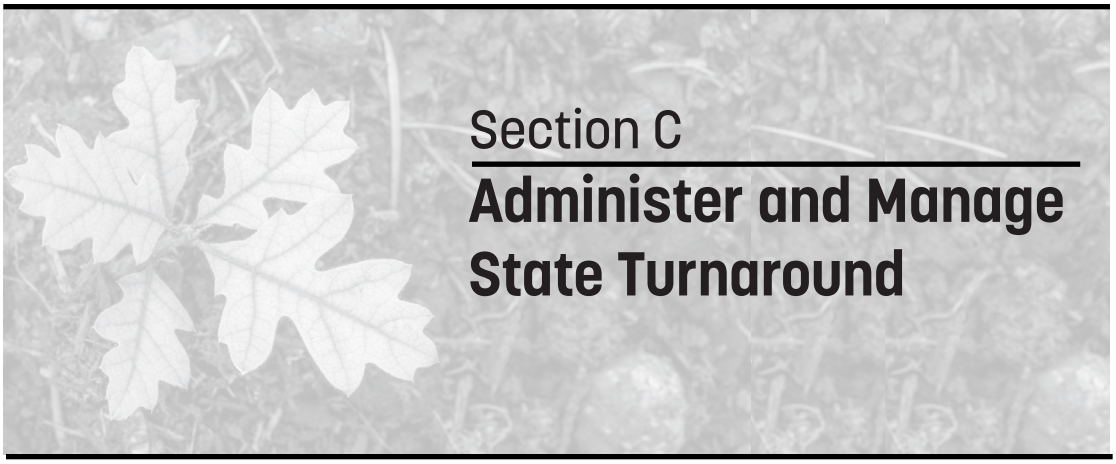
Player, D., & Katz, V. (2013). *School improvement in Ohio and Missouri: An evaluation of the school turnaround specialist program* (PLE Working Paper). Charlottesville, VA: Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education, University of Virginia Darden School Foundation.

Rowan, B., Chiang, F-S., & Miller, R. J. (1997). Using research on employees' performance to study the effect of teachers on student achievement. *Sociology of Education, 70*, 256–284.

Steiner, L., Hassel, E. A., & Hassel, B. (2008). *School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Use of education data at the local level: From accountability to instructional improvement*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/use-of-education-data/use-of-education-data.pdf

Wayman, J. C., Cho, V., & Johnston, M. T. (2007). *The data-informed district: A district-wide evaluation of data use in the Natrona County School District*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas. Retrieved from http://edadmin.edb.utexas.edu/datause/Wayman_data_use_evaluation.pdf



Section C

Administer and Manage State Turnaround

The State of the State: New SEA Structures for a New Approach to Turnaround

Justin Cohen & Alison Segal

It has been more than a decade since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Despite that law's effect of heightening state and federal governments' attentiveness to school accountability, the state's role in turning around chronically underperforming schools is still nascent and underdeveloped. This is exacerbated by the fact that, despite some interesting models, there is no "silver bullet" solution for chronic school failure, and there most likely never will be. Moreover, there is arguably no single best structure for the state education agency's (SEA) role in turnaround given how differently various states and their local education agencies (LEAs) are configured. In other words, what can be done in a country wherein both California and Washington, DC have SEAs?

In order to provide optimal support for turnaround schools, an SEA must intentionally organize to support those schools' needs. In addition, despite the fact that federal accountability reforms have driven extraordinary focus on the school and classroom levels, an SEA must also carefully consider the role—or lack of a role—of the district (LEA) in school turnaround.

This chapter examines existing literature on SEA organizations and how these organizations provide support for schools and districts. While there are a range of approaches and organizational structures, we pay particular attention to shifting SEA practices and culture to better support districts, attending to an SEA's reorganization, and the general range of SEA structures and activities implemented to support turnaround.

Through both our examination of extant research and the accumulated knowledge of Mass Insight's[1] fifteen years of experience working with SEAs, we have observed that states' strategies for addressing chronic underperformance at the school level fall somewhere on a spectrum between (a) laissez-faire (i.e., the state collects data and encourages LEAs and schools to act on that data) and (b) complete takeover of a district or school. While these two points of reference occupy the poles of the approach, most SEAs employ a suite of strategies that exist between these two poles. Despite some nationally recognized work in state takeover, however, the preponderance of evidence suggests that most states still pursue strategies closer to the "laissez-faire" approach. We will often refer to the "laissez-faire" approach as being "light-touch," meaning that the SEA is not heavily involved with LEAs beyond compliance monitoring and specific instances where a close relationship with an LEA incites action.

While most SEAs will struggle to serve and react to all of their LEAs equitably, we suggest that SEAs take a strategic approach to developing and deploying intervention strategies. Rather than creating customized protocols for each LEA, SEAs could identify the highest leverage services that it can reasonably deploy, and then apply those practices to the LEAs whose needs are most aligned to those high-leverage services. In addition, SEAs should identify "proof points" wherein they deploy resources more aggressively to achieve faster, bolder gains. For instance, to provide support to several struggling LEAs, the SEA may foster the development of zones, essentially mini-districts, to provide persistently low-achieving schools with localized heavy-touch support to help them succeed. This method allows the SEA to cluster schools based on their needs and add on-the-ground capacity through Lead Partners. Others may create a lighter-touch internal turnaround office to guide LEAs with turnaround schools, consistent with the "laissez-faire" approach, while others may opt to create an independent, state-led LEA that takes schools out of their existing LEAs, such as the Achievement School District in Tennessee, which we will discuss later in this chapter.

Emerging Knowledge Base

While somewhat thin, the existing research on how SEAs organize to support school turnaround highlights a real range of approaches. The Academic Development Institute's Center on Innovation & Improvement supplied SEAs with a number of handbooks and reports, which is where we found the majority of our resources. It is important to note, too, that SEA structure is just one

[1]Mass Insight Education, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Boston, MA, was founded in 1997 to help create and implement strategies that close educational achievement gaps. Through its two major efforts, The School Turnaround Group and The Mass Math + Science Initiative, Mass Insight Education partners with school districts to dramatically improve student achievement through increasing academic rigor and reinventing district systems. It is the sister organization of Mass Insight Global Partnerships, which has worked since 1989 to help businesses and institutions remain globally competitive. In 2007, Mass Insight Education published *The Turnaround Challenge*, a call-to-action style report that challenged the nation to improve the nation's lowest performing schools (bottom 5%).

ingredient in the state intervention infrastructure (Rhim, Hassel, & Redding, 2007). In particular, state legislation and constitutions may restrict what an SEA is able to do and not do, particularly with respect to intervening in local governance. Our literature review found that engraining change in the organizational culture of an SEA is often the best way to begin reorganization, especially in cases where the political will does not exist or is "shaky" (Hess, Lautzenheiser, Brown, & Owen, 2011; Mass Insight Education, 2012b; Murphy & Rainey, 2012).

The Practice Continuum

Any meaningful restructuring of SEA capacity implies a concomitant rethinking of practice. Murphy and Rainey (2012) discussed a necessary "shift from 'compliance monitor' to 'performance monitor'" (p. 3) for SEAs working with turnaround and how that requires a realignment of positions and responsibilities. Speaking to the continuum described at the beginning of this chapter, Murphy and Rainey's research culminated in the development of a linear spectrum, where "All In" lies at one end of the line, with a counterpart of "Results Without Rancor" at the opposite end. Between the two is "Bounded Equilibrium." They found a majority of SEAs employed a "Results Without Rancor" strategy, which restructures some parts of the SEA to focus on performance management. In the end, though, this strategy often relies on relationship building to help LEAs support their lowest performing schools rather than more politically aggressive strategies. Generally, an SEA hopes that this method will build the foundation for a sustainable approach to building a stronger district for school support. Murphy and Rainey found that this strategy requires a large cultural shift within both the SEA and the LEA. The SEA must embody two firm beliefs: first, believe that the LEA has the necessary foundation/organization to support its schools; and second, believe that the LEA has knowledge/understanding of the day-to-day work of schools. Finally, the LEA must be comfortable with the changes the SEA imposes and work collaboratively to support the SEA's reforms.[2]

At the other end of the spectrum, "All In" shifts the major responsibility from the LEA to the SEA for direct school support. In this case, states create an entirely new entity to lead a complete takeover of failing schools. In some states, such as New Jersey, the SEA does not have the legal power to do this, although they may use other legislative or constitutional powers to exact a higher level of control. Other states, such as Tennessee (Achievement School District) and Louisiana (Recovery School District), have developed either an office or statewide LEA specifically for this purpose. As a result, some states wishing to pursue an "All In" strategy will instead find themselves working in a "Bounded Disequilibrium" framework. This framework relies on a "carrot-and-stick" policy approach to encourage LEA behavior that should best support failing schools. Michigan,

[2]In some cases, LEAs may lack capacity to support their own schools. In this case, SEAs can explore takeover, creation of Zones, or include Lead Partners in the state or local structure to build LEA capacity.

Illinois, Indiana, and several other states also have moved to institutionalize a more direct approach to intervention.

As for physical reorganization, Murphy and Rainey cite some SEAs' reorganization efforts that resulted in either creating or strengthening existing regional offices. While they concede that this approach does indeed add an additional layer of bureaucracy, it also allows for SEA staff to focus on a smaller, regional cohort of schools in need of improvement. This helps to develop stronger relationships, while also placing more focus on accountability and reporting. Regional offices may have the most impact in states with either large geographic coverage or many different major metropolitan areas.

SEA Structural Challenges

Research documents that SEA structures should allow for provisions of political cover to LEAs and schools (Hess et al., 2011). SEAs can provide this political cover by owning the ability to move to the "All In" or "state takeover" end of the spectrum of intervention when necessary. In doing so, the SEA can selectively exercise its more politically aggressive tactics—namely takeover—in an effort to provide incentives and political cover for other reform-minded LEAs to act. However, before threatening takeover, the SEA must determine that it does have the capacity to follow through. A state may not even consider this option without its own political cover from the governor, state board of education, or federal government. Others may simply not have the legislative ability to execute a takeover.

Hess et al. (2011) found, as did we, that it is very difficult to discuss trends and comparisons in SEA organizational makeup, because there are so few original research studies. This is mainly due to the constant flux that SEA structures experience, especially in response to new federal initiatives. For example, the report found that the most recent, published document that explicitly focused on SEA staffing and funding was a compilation by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that was created almost two decades ago. Though this report's study was on a smaller scale, it did find similar results: Many SEAs experience lower than ideal capacity because they lack human capital. The authors claimed the blame here lies partly in pay grade regulations: Districts often offer higher pay grades than the SEA. For example, they cited that while the chief executive officer of Chicago Public Schools earned $230,000 in 2011, the Illinois state superintendent earned $190,000 without any room for salary growth. This may result in districts' positions being more attractive to talented individuals.

Hess et al. (2011) called for a reorganization of brain power; above all, the structure of the SEA should "de-silo" efforts. The office charged with school improvement efforts should not be an "island" unto itself, and particularly not nested within the broader distribution of federal title funds. Hess et al. (2011) challenged SEAs to push the envelope in their restructuring and build bridges

among and between departments. The report cited Delaware as an example, which, in 2012, reorganized its SEA to best suit the state's LEAs by merging some office branches to create a "one-stop" service with stronger alignment to LEA operations. Based on our experience with 12 states, we agree that the School Improvement Office needs to have tentacles throughout the SEA, and states need to further differentiate "improvement" into varying degrees of intervention intensity.

Running through all considerations of SEA restructuring is the question of sustainability. We can change the structure, but what happens when there is leadership or staff turnover? How can we ensure that a restructure survives personnel changes? Hess et al. (2011) say that a strong culture of high expectations for students and adults is key. They suggest maintaining political pressure, through public communications, to avoid going back to the old way of doing things. This includes drawing out a plan to encourage buy-in both internally and externally to a new turnaround unit and creating strong lines of open communication and collaboration up to the state chief as well as among other department of education offices.

As Hess et al. (2011) make clear, culture also seems to be a critical component of sustaining reform. The report found that along with the siloed departments that often exist, there is sometimes an additional fragmentation that appears between federal employees at the state level and their state-employed counterparts. Although they are all working for the same cause, the two types of employees tend to be in different silos. Many SEA leaders found that to accomplish a cultural change, they needed to shift from a compliance-focused environment to one that focused on the real reason every employee held their respective jobs—to support district reform and effective educational opportunities for all students. If this resonated with everyone in the SEA and the organization could change to put students first, then collaboration within the organization became more feasible, which is the first step to developing strong relationships with LEAs. From here, LEAs must also be open to a change in norms; rather than playing into compliance, local education leaders must also become comfortable with taking the lead on local school improvement.

Research also indicates that funding shouldn't be a barrier to reorganization efforts. Kober and Renter (2012) documented that many state legislatures cut costs to the SEA as opposed to districts to find savings. While cost-cutting might result in overall decreases in SEA staffing levels, many states were able to increase staff levels in reform-critical offices while dismissing staff aligned to less relevant functions. In fact, Kober and Renter (2012) found that many states were even cutting staff from other departments to maintain—or in some cases increase—their capacity within educational improvement offices. Additionally, in some cases technological advances helped increase capacity in those departments that have been forced to downsize due to budgetary constraints. This is

especially true in terms of evaluation analytics and longitudinal data tracking. In some instances, federal dollars may be used to supplant state dollars and avoid downsizing. For example, some SEAs might seek guidance for supplementing grant streams with Title I dollars for schoolwide funding.

Support Systems and State-Level Intervention

The best structure for an SEA depends on the specific needs of the schools that require the strongest supports. Public education is a state's responsibility, as the constitution leaves responsibility for educating the public to the states. However, the federal government has become a powerful influence in education by providing funding attached to conditions (i.e., SIG, NCLB waivers), leaving implementation up to the state. We found that there are various methods for determining which schools need what kinds of support (Mass Insight Education, 2012b). School Improvement Grant (SIG) accountability structures, NCLB performance measures, funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and state Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility waivers provide frameworks for identifying chronically underperforming schools and their needs. However, while these programs should incentivize SEAs to restructure their services, there is no mandate to do so. Neither is there a mandate to require LEAs to concomitantly change their approaches. The various programs continue to evolve over time—especially as administrators and their views change. As such, SEAs cannot afford to provide a one-size-fits-all service to the schools they serve; rather, they must remodel their procedures and policies to reflect variable school and district performance.

Federal accountability and intervention strategies can drive urgency at the state and district level, but other external forces can also influence action. However, Murphy and Rainey (2012) cautioned that waiting for a crisis to appear is not the best practice to infuse urgency. For Louisiana, the disaster of Hurricane Katrina forced the state to start anew. While unfortunate events such as this often spur a state to take action, Murphy and Rainey (2012) advised that the current state of education is a "disaster" in itself and should be an ample catalyst to drive change to help these struggling schools and serve as the basis for communicating the rationale for a transformation of current systems and the status quo.

Finally, our own research provides a useful framework for rethinking the structure of the state intervention system. We found that successful school intervention strategies generally relied on creating stronger policy "conditions" for intervention; investing selectively in increased "capacity" to drive interventions, either at the SEA or LEA level; and "clustering" interventions—particularly in K–12 feeder patterns—in order to maximize the impact of investments. These so-called "3 Cs" offer a policy framework for states looking to make more aggressive, targeted investments in remedying chronic underperformance (Mass Insight Education, 2012b).

To cultivate the conditions, capacity, and clustering for turnaround, we recommend that states move the turnaround function out of the traditional "Title I/School Improvement" hierarchy. While there are good reasons to maintain a statewide approach to incremental improvement, states need a specialized unit to handle the most entrenched problems. In other sectors—such as state infrastructure investment and transportation—states create special authorities with unique powers, particularly for massive challenges. SEAs could learn from this approach. For instance, Massachusetts created an independent Massachusetts Water Resource Authority to manage the Boston Harbor cleanup in the 1980s. This authority existed outside of the normal constraints of bureaucratic authority and was able to attract a different kind of transformational talent to a major initiative (Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, 2005).

Outside of the creation of a special purpose authority, we have also supported and written about a number of states that fostered the creation of protected in-district improvement zones through competitive grant processes. While all states have created subcompetitions for SIG dollars, a smaller number of states created processes that actually account for the quality and intensity of proposed interventions, while requiring the use of preapproved Lead Partners for turnaround. It is possible that creating competitions for SIG funds preferences better organized and prepared LEAs. That said, this is probably a feature of competitions rather than a glitch, because the program already is limited to the country's lowest performing schools, and requiring some preparedness is a safeguard against investing in hopeless situations. The SEA's support of Lead Partners for districts or zones takes a great deal of direct service and technical assistance toward capacity building off the plates of both the SEA and the LEAs it serves. Virginia, Delaware, and Illinois all have pursued such an approach.[3] In this model, the SEA moves from a compliance mindset to a competitive mindset, incentivizing more aggressive methods of turnaround. We called this the "intra-state Race to the Top" approach. We cautioned that many states require a self-evaluation of current practices before they launch into this structure, as it requires significant managerial and investment sophistication. Without the proper planning, developing a zone will leave schools without the support they need from a partner, district, or state-level liaison.

From the review of available recent literature on SEA organization and structure, we find three major takeaways:

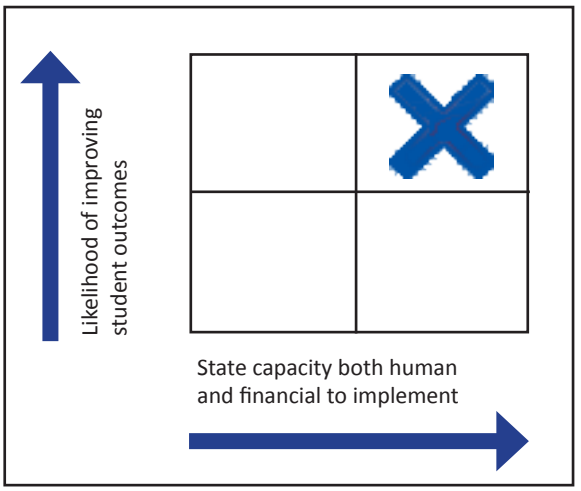
1. The actions carried out by specific SEA structures lie across a continuum ranging from light-touch strategies to complete takeover. The majority of SEAs currently do not rely on a clear organizational imperative, but rather

[3]In addition to research, we at Mass Insight Education also worked in partnership with the Delaware Department of Education and assisted in identification and development of Lead Partners, as well as the creation of the state's Partnership Zone.

on relationships with LEAs to provide support. To build capacity for all LEAs and turnaround schools, SEAs should reevaluate this approach.

2. The key to maintaining any reorganization is changing the culture. Engraining the new missions in the soul of the organization will outlast turnover in staff and leadership.
3. Through the financial crisis, many SEAs have maintained or built upon the capacity and human capital of their turnaround units. Although some of this investment was driven by shrewd actions by the federal government, these investments provide a long-term platform for building the capacity of SEAs to invest in turning around chronically underperforming schools.

Based on the findings from the literature review and our experience working with both SEAs and LEAs, we submit that the structure of an SEA should both create and provide for: (1) a mechanism for assessing the kinds of intervention a district requires (a diagnostic function); (2) a strategic review process for determining the financial and talent capacity of the SEA to provide those kinds of interventions; (3) aligned system for delivering those interventions that are both feasible and of the highest yield vis-à-vis student outcomes; and (4) a quasicompetitive process for making investments in turnaround in order to create "proof points" for bold strategies.



Focusing SEAs on Turnaround

In the end, our proposed SEA structure requires one particular characteristic: a district- and school-facing focus. Especially in the turnaround or school improvement office, it is important for the SEA to maintain a strong customer-service attitude. This includes actively communicating to schools and districts in need of support that the state will direct appropriate resources to turnaround efforts, provide a structure of political cover for bold decisions and actions, and

maintain transparency by inviting input on decisions that will affect the schools and districts it supports.

The diagnostic function is fairly straightforward. SEAs need a mechanism for determining what kinds of interventions are most likely to succeed given a particular school and/or district environment. A chronically underperforming school in a relatively high-performing district is going to need a different kind of attention than a school in a district that contains 50% of a state's chronically underperforming schools. Similarly, a school with a 98% free or reduced price lunch population probably needs different supports than a school with relatively high socioeconomic status but a high percentage of English language learners. Note that both the school conditions and the district conditions—and practices within those districts and schools—are critical to consider. For example, interventions that require significant district structural cooperation, like aligned coaching schemes, are unlikely to succeed in a low-capacity district. Any reasonable diagnostic mechanism ought to take into account leadership team capacity at both the school and district level. Even in the smallest states, such as Rhode Island or Delaware, an assortment of persistently low-achieving schools can require the full gamut of support. It may seem simpler for an SEA in this situation to provide individualized menus of support, but it still might not be the best investment of SEA time or resources or even of the LEA's time.

The strategic review process is the mechanism through which SEAs make realistic assessments of their own abilities to deliver on intervention protocols. The revamp of the SIG program was helpful in sharpening SEAs' ability to target investments, in that states can differentiate both funding levels and intensity of interventions. While "state takeover" might seem like an attractive and expedient mechanism for quickly turning around a school, states have, at best, a mixed track record of assembling the capacity to run schools in perpetuity. Oftentimes, state takeover suffers from a short planning process or lack of clear communication to the community. For example, Maryland's state takeover process of individual schools in Baltimore was rushed and did not give the state time to identify and vet potential external partners; Pennsylvania's oversight of Philadelphia schools was implemented too quickly and failed to include local stakeholder input; and four years into state takeover in New Jersey, local stakeholders still did not understand the rationale or process for the state's takeover of their schools (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). States should use the results of a diagnostic process—ideally over the course of multiple years—to assess the kinds of interventions they are capable of providing and leveraging. The strategic review should consider human capital, long-term fiscal sustainability, local governance, statewide governance, and political cover.

The aligned systems are critical for delivering the kinds of interventions identified through the earlier parts of the process. While organizational structure

certainly is not sufficient to drive change, a strategy misaligned to structure is destined to fail. SEAs should create enough autonomy for their turnaround strategies to have a chance at working, and burying such strategies under layers of bureaucracy stifles the ability to be nimble and innovate.

Finally, the competitive process—though potentially politically unpopular—can help states make smarter investments. When districts and schools compete to win grants, they are pushed to invest in rigorous planning to be successful. Backed by a rigorous plan, actions are more likely to be sustainable, first because school leaders feel ownership over the proposed plan, and second because in writing the plan, conversations have already been started about change and reform around current practices. Moreover, while competitive grant processes might favor better-resourced competitors, the SIG program is limited to a small subset of chronically underperforming schools, in which case all schools are at a level of operation requiring intervention and some sort of increased support. The distinction among the schools is their ability to create and implement a strong plan for improvement. Perhaps most importantly, a competitive process enables the emergence of "proof points," the success of which can accelerate outcomes and provide political cover for future endeavors.

Whichever interventions are selected, an effective structure for SEA support to high-need schools requires removing some layers of bureaucracy. These schools cannot afford to wait, and bureaucracies are designed to institutionalize reforms, not generate them. Going upwards, the state's predominant turnaround unit should have a line of direct report to the State Education Chief. The unit also should have an external, politically insulated advisory council that provides cover for difficult decisions. In addition, the turnaround unit should be both a sustainable force and able to collaborate with other SEA departments. SEAs should secure funding to keep the office in play, while also encouraging the development of strong human capital and capacity within the department. This includes working with external partners at the state level (Mass Insight Education, 2012a).

Some states create a Deputy Superintendent position at the state level to be responsible specifically for school improvement. In Georgia, for example, a cohort of SEA school improvement staff was transferred to a newly established Office of School Turnaround to focus on school improvement and accountability (Murphy & Rainey, 2012).

Examples from the Field and Concrete Practices

Though we cannot say that any state has found an absolute best practice (if they had, they would not have any schools left to support!), some states are employing practices that seem to be working. These strategies include partnering with third-party organizations to provide turnaround expertise, creating SEA-level leadership positions specific to turnaround, or creating zones of schools.

At least three states make it easier for districts to work with third-party organizations with turnaround expertise. The state of Illinois preapproves Lead Partners for school turnaround, and LEAs must select a Lead Partner in order to be eligible for turnaround funds. Indiana conducts a similar pre-approval process, and the state uses third-party management organizations when intervening directly in schools. The Virginia Department of Education also uses a Lead Partner model; the state also tailors the Lead Partner requirements to serve the needs of the state, adding in stipulations such as collaboration with social service organizations, assisting in student funding research, and working with the local community to garner support for reform (Rhim & Redding, 2011; Smith & Shannon, 2011).

In our work, we advocate for SEAs to build a marketplace for Lead Partners to develop and grow. Corbett (2011) believed Lead Partners (or Lead Turnaround Partners) could serve as an external unit to evaluate, plan, and partner with schools. A Lead Partner does not need to be a preexisting organization; rather, it can be a homegrown 501(c)(3) that is held accountable to an external board of local stakeholders, or even an in-unit component of the LEA's central office. In our work, an effective Lead Partner has four characteristics:

1. The organization has signed a 3–5 year performance contract for student achievement with the district or state;
2. The organization has assumed authority for decision making about school staffing;
3. The organization has agreed to provide core academic and student support services either directly or through subcontracted "Supporting Partners"; and
4. The organization has an embedded, consistent, and intense relationship with each school—including physical presence—during the turnaround period for five days per week.

Other states have gone so far as to create a new entity in addition to the SEA. Going back to Murphy and Rainey's (2012) research, the approach that Louisiana took in developing the RSD represents the "All-In" approach. This strategy assumes that the district requires SEA action to move forward; in its current state, the district is unable to change the schools. The RSD was created in 2003—before Hurricane Katrina—and although it used that event to quickly step in to take over operations of schools that the district was unable to operate, the so-called necessary "crisis" to spur its creation was truly the state of the LEA's education system. On the intervention spectrum discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this strategy falls closer to the end of complete district takeover (Reform Support Network, 2012).

The ASD in Tennessee is another example of an SEA focusing enhanced resources on a cluster of the lowest-performing schools across the state (namely

in Memphis and Nashville) that require the greatest support. The model focuses on building capacity for districts and schools. In this instance, the state created an independent entity at the state level to directly control a zone of schools spread across multiple districts that were seriously underperforming. This lays the foundation for the SEA to be (1) school-facing, and (2) bolder in its actions to support and encourage improvement at chronically low-performing schools. The truly unique aspect of this structural model is that the ASD handpicks schools that have been identified as Priority Schools within districts to support, as opposed to identifying and taking over entire districts (Murphy & Rainey, 2012). The state of Tennessee granted the ASD the ability to authorize Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) to serve the schools within the LEA. Schools are then managed for at least five years by either the ASD or by the authorized CMO after a comprehensive assessment identifies the best support system for each school (Tennessee Department of Education, 2012).

Other states have stopped short of direct takeover, while still aiming to incentivize dramatic action through state intervention. The Delaware Department of Education created a statewide Partnership Zone of low-performing schools. The School Improvement Unit in Delaware is able to offer targeted support to these schools, including funding and technical assistance, partly due to the Partnership Zone's added capacity. These serve as the carrot while the schools must pursue innovative ideas and strategies to improve their standards, and LEAs have to renegotiate collective bargaining agreements in order to provide more operating flexibilities to participating schools. The expectation is that the added autonomy along with special SEA supports will lead to a better environment for academic growth (Mass Insight Education, 2012a). In fact, this structure could be marketed as a proof point within the state: In summer 2012, test score analyses showed that every Partnership Zone school saw progress and that the Partnership Zone schools' growth outpaced the state average in both reading and math for similar grades (Delaware Department of Education, 2012).

Action Principles for SEAs

In conclusion, there are a variety of steps SEAs can take to organize more effectively to support turnaround LEAs and schools. The following six steps aim to provide starting points for states to more effectively organize to provide the strongest support to their LEAs.

- Be bold. While there are no silver bullets for school turnaround, light-touch solutions alone rarely work. Schools that have failed for years are unlikely to change through modest interventions. SEAs should determine whether they or other entities are best positioned to provide the supports necessary to be bold, but politically popular paths of least resistance should be avoided.

- Focus on what schools need to succeed, as opposed to creating additional regulatory and compliance burdens, and create "proof points." By focusing on adding capacity—either with or without the cooperation of LEAs—an SEA that employs productive customer service techniques and provides technical assistance is likelier to see strong outcomes. Creating "proof points" quickly will get the outcomes and political cover SEAs need to push further.
- Pursue legislative and policy actions that provide the SEA with the authority to create a nonbureaucratic space—perhaps even a statewide LEA—for turnaround. SEAs that created new entities within their overall structure, or zones of schools across districts, did so with political support. SEAs must work to garner political will from the legislative branch, the school board, and the state chief in order to create conditions at the state level for school success.
- Encourage collaboration with third-party Lead Partners. Organizations with specialized turnaround experience can help to integrate and deliver solutions in low-capacity LEAs. Creating a homegrown 501(c)(3) organization that is accountable for improving student achievement—and maintains that accountability through oversight by community stakeholders—adds capacity at both the state and school level.
- Identify, own, and intentionally communicate strategies. States that have seen any success have done so through an intentional and sustained strategy—which includes clear communication of state strategy to LEAs and public stakeholders. While there is no silver bullet solution, muddling through will never suffice.
- Identify outside accountability partners. Turnaround decisions are bound to be unpopular. Identify an outside organization that can publish a data-rich annual report on the "State of Turnaround," so that states have the political credibility to continue successful reforms while discontinuing unsuccessful ones.

References

Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2005). *State takeovers of individual schools*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org/pubs/restructuring/KnowledgeIssues1StateTakeovers.pdf

Corbett, J. (2011). *Lead turnaround partners: How the emerging marketplace of lead turnaround partners is changing school improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/LeadPartners.pdf

Delaware Department of Education. (2012, July 19). *DCAS score release shows progress in Partnership Zone schools.* Retrieved from http://www.doe.k12.de.us/news/2012/0719b.shtml

Hess, F., Lautzenheiser, D., Brown, C., & Owen, I. (2011, July 27). *State education agencies as agents of change*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress; American Enterprise; Institute for Public Policy Research; The Broad Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.aei.org/papers/education/state-education-agencies-as-agents-of-change-paper/

Kerins, T., Perlman, C., & Redding, S. (2009). *Coherence in statewide systems of support.* Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/CoherenceintheStatewideSystemofSupport.pdf

Kober, N., & Renter, D. (2012, February 7). *State education agency funding and staffing in the education reform era*. Washington, DC: The Center for Education Policy. Retrieved from http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=396

Mass Insight Education. (2012a, May). *Being bold: An assessment of turnaround initiatives in select school districts and states.* Boston, MA: Mass Insight Education. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/162/file/1/pubs/2012/05/23/Mass_Insight_STG_-_Being_Bold_Assessment_-_May_2012_1.pdf

Mass Insight Education. (2012b, June). S*tate education agencies: Creating proof points and scaling results.* Boston, MA: Mass Insight Education. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/cms_page_media/201/STG%20Turnaround%20Brief%20-%20June%202012%20-%20SEA%20Proof%20Points.pdf

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. (2005). *5 year progress report (2000-2004)*. Boston, MA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.mwra.state.ma.us/publications/5yearreport0004/5yearreport0004.pdf

Murphy, P., & Rainey, L. (2012, September). *Modernizing the state education agency: Different paths toward performance management.* Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/

Reform Support Network. (2012). *Highlights of state approaches to school turnaround governance.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/st-highlights.pdf

Rhim, L., Hassel, B., & Redding, S. (2007). State role in supporting school improvement. In S. Redding & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Handbook on statewide systems of support* (pp. 21–56). Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute.

Rhim, L., & Redding, S. (2011). *Fulcrum of change*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/Fulcrum_of_Change.pdf

Smith, K., & Shannon, D. (2011). *Virginia's lead turnaround partner initiative*. [PowerPoint]. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/models/va_lead_turnaround_partner_initiative.ppt

Tennessee Department of Education. (2012). *Title I school improvement grant: Achievement school district*. Retrieved from http://www.tn.gov/education/fedprog/doc/ASD_SIG_App_C2.pdf

State Approaches to Turnaround in ESEA Flexibility Plans

Carole Perlman and Susan Hanes

Background

When the U.S. Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001, state education agencies (SEAs) found themselves in a new and more complex regulatory environment. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) required states to put in place an accountability regimen with sanctions for districts and schools that failed to show adequate yearly progress (AYP) in a march toward all students meeting standards by 2014. The progressively more severe sanctions for each successive year that a school failed to make AYP included restructuring for schools falling short for five consecutive years. Restructuring options were:

- Turning the school over to the state;
- Reopening the school as a charter school;
- Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school;
- Replacing all or most of the staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP; or
- Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform.

Within a few years, two problems became obvious: (1) the "all students" target for meeting state standards on annual assessments by 2014 was not going to be achieved; (2) districts faced with restructuring schools predominately chose the mildest available option, and the schools remained in a low-achieving rut.

A study of five states by the Center on Education Policy (2008) found that during the 2006–2007 school year, districts and states overwhelmingly avoided

the most drastic restructuring options, instead selecting the "any other" option for between 86%–96% of their schools in restructuring. Nationally, few schools in restructuring were implementing significant changes to school governance and staffing (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Brinson and Rhim (2009) observed that LEAs often chose the least prescriptive restructuring option, in part because other, more significant options were not appealing or possibly because of state law (e.g., prohibitions against state takeovers [Steiner, 2006], lack of laws authorizing charter schools or caps on the number of charter schools [Hassel, Hassel, Arkin, Kowal, & Steiner, 2006]). In other cases, outside contractors were unavailable or unaffordable, and replacing some or all teachers and administrators was impractical because it was not possible to recruit staff likely to get better results (Kowal, 2009). In addition to these possible barriers as reasons for not choosing a more dramatic option for restructuring, LEAs often simply lacked the political will to execute significant change.

NCLB enabled the U.S. Department of Education, through Section 1003(g) of ESEA Title I, to administer a School Improvement Grant (SIG) program that awarded funds to states for the purpose of school improvement with guidelines and regulations for the allocation of the major portion of the funds to districts with schools not keeping pace with NCLB timelines. Congress approved steady increases in SIG funding in an attempt to resuscitate NCLB with an infusion of resources. But even as the SIG funding increased, so did the number of schools failing to make AYP. By the 2010–2011 school year, 48% of the nation's schools were not making AYP, according to a study by the Center on Education Policy (2012). The U.S. Department of Education (2013) reported that in the 2011–2012 school year, 7,643 schools were in restructuring status.

When Arne Duncan assumed the role of Secretary of Education in 2009, the trends from NCLB data were clear. The number of schools failing to meet NCLB trajectories was staggering and growing each year. The number of persistently low-achieving schools was likewise rising and revealing a segment of significant dysfunction within the public education system. The new administration attacked the problems through three competitive grants: (1) Race to the Top would attempt overhaul of whole state systems; (2) Investing in Innovation (i.e., I3) grants would infuse innovation into the system; and (3) SIG would target the lowest achieving schools and provide unprecedented resources.

School Improvement Grants 2.0: 2010–2013

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) pumped large sums of money into education as part of an overall strategy to stimulate the economy. The SIG program had a substantially increase in funding, with awards to states for competitive subgrants to LEAs that demonstrated the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to substantially

raise student achievement in their lowest performing schools. The 2010 SIG program required more rapid, dramatic, and prescriptive interventions than ever before and provided a massive infusion of money to fund these interventions (Perlman & Redding, 2011).

Beginning in 2010, states could apply for funding that would enable the persistently lowest achieving 5% of schools in the state to apply one of four prescribed rapid improvement models (Perlman & Redding, 2011):

- **Turnaround model**: The LEA replaces the principal and rehires no more than 50% of the staff; gives greater principal autonomy; implements other prescribed and recommended strategies.
- **Restart model**: The LEA converts or closes and reopens the school under a charter school operator, charter management organization, or education management organization.
- **School closure**: The LEA closes the school and enrolls the students in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model**: The LEA replaces the principal (except in specified situations); implements a rigorous staff evaluation and development system; institutes comprehensive instructional reform; increases learning time and applies community-oriented school strategies; and provides greater operational flexibility and support for the school.

Once again, the least dramatic model (transformation) was by far the most widely chosen (Hurlburt, Therriault, & Le Floch, 2012), accounting for 75% of awards; turnaround accounted for an additional 19%.

ESEA Flexibility Waivers

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education allowed each SEA the option to request flexibility on behalf of itself, its LEAs, and its schools from certain requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction.[1] The U.S. Department of Education chose the flexibility process to address problems with NCLB because the expected reauthorization of ESEA was stalled in Congress, the number of schools not meeting AYP was growing astronomically, and NCLB's requirements, such as the provision of supplemental educational services, was viewed by many states as an unproductive use of funds.

One of the requirements of flexibility is that the state must effect dramatic, systemic change in the lowest-performing schools by publicly identifying "Priority schools" and ensuring that each LEA with one or more of these schools implements, for three years, meaningful interventions aligned with the

[1]For a more detailed explanation regarding the ESEA flexibility waiver, see http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility

turnaround principles in each of these schools. The SEA must also develop criteria to determine when a school may exit priority status.[2] Priority schools include:

- the lowest 5% of Title I schools based on achievement and progress on statewide assessments;
- Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high schools with graduation rates less than 60%; or
- SIG schools.

As noted by the U.S. Department of Education, education experts and reformers differ on the best strategies for the lowest performing schools to undertake, but most agree that the key factors for success include a dynamic principal with a clear vision for establishing a culture of high expectations and talented teachers who share that vision, with a commitment to improving instruction through more collaboration and better use of data.[3] Flexibility requirements stipulated that states' interventions in Priority schools must assist schools in accordance with the following turnaround principles (U.S. Department of Education, 2012):

- Providing strong leadership;
- Ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction;
- Redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;
- Strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards;
- Using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement;
- Establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other nonacademic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs; and
- Providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

State Flexibility Plans

States have designed their accountability and support systems in a variety of ways that reflect their diverse circumstances. The remainder of this chapter describes how several states addressed the turnaround process in their ESEA Flexibility Requests. For readers seeking additional information, a link to each state's approved flexibility request is given.

Idaho

Idaho provides an illustration of how a large, sparsely populated, rural state has leveraged its resources and used online tools to support school and district improvement.[4]

[2]For a more detailed explanation regarding the definition of Priority schools, see http://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/supporting-state-local-progress.pdf

[3]For a more detailed explanation regarding the principles underlying ESEA flexibility waivers, see http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/resources/turn-around.pdf

[4]See http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/id.pdf

Idaho employs a five-star rating system for schools based on the following measures:

- Reading, mathematics, and language achievement for all students;
- Achievement growth for all students;
- Subgroup achievement growth, using a combined subgroup composed of economically disadvantaged students, minorities, students with disabilities, and English learners;
- Graduation rate (for schools with grade 12);
- Percentage of students reaching college readiness on college entrance/placement exams (for schools with grade 12); and
- Percentage of juniors and seniors completing at least one AP, IB, dual credit, or Tech Prep course and the percentage receiving a grade of C or better in advanced courses (for schools with grade 12).

Idaho uses the WISE (Ways to Improve School Effectiveness) tool, a version of the Academic Development Institutes's Indistar®[5] online tool, to create and monitor implementation of rapid improvement plans for Priority schools. WISE includes a set of over 80 research-based practices that are associated with school improvement. In addition, the WISE tool contains links to research summaries and videos of educators demonstrating improvement strategies.

The turnaround planning process for each Priority school is preceded by a site visit to determine the school's existing capacity and collect evidence of practices associated with substantial school improvement (Center on Innovation & Improvement, 2009). Data are collected by an external team of reviewers who observe all teachers, including teachers of special populations. The site visit protocol is linked to the WISE Tool, so recommendations directly tie back to school and district improvement plans and processes. Recommendations also include connections to programs, technical assistance, and training opportunities that match the needs of the district or school.

In creating plans, Priority schools must use rapid improvement strategies and address feedback provided to the school and district through the site visit. As the school and district plans are implemented, notes of steps taken are entered into the online WISE system. The district may use the tool to monitor the progress of schools, and the state may use the tool to monitor implementation and progress of school and district plans. All school improvement plans, including turnaround plans, are developed jointly by schools and districts, approved by the state, and monitored by both the state and district. Idaho holds districts responsible for the quality and the fidelity of implementation of those plans and monitors the districts' support and technical assistance efforts through its statewide system of support.

Before the school creates its turnaround plan, the district must choose one of five permissible SIG turnaround models: transformation, turnaround, restart,

[5]For more information on Indistar, see www.indistar.org

closure, or a governance partnership model, in which the district partners with an external entity to implement the turnaround principles and transform the governance of the school. In the case of district charter schools, the district must renegotiate and significantly restructure the school's charter.

The interventions Idaho uses are aligned to the Turnaround Principles defined in ESEA flexibility. Idaho provides on-site technical assistance to districts with Priority schools and recommendations to districts regarding school and district leadership capacity, instructional practice, and governance structure. In addition to the site visit, the statewide system of support team[6] oversees the implementation of the following services directly:

- **Idaho Building Capacity Project**: Cultivation of leadership in rural and remote areas within the state is a key focus of this collaboration among the state and three universities. Distinguished educators trained by the state are assigned to all participating schools and districts within the network. They provide monthly training to leadership teams and assist in planning.
- **Principals Academy of Leadership**: Principals participate in a balance of content instruction, professional conversation, and collegial instructional rounds related directly to instructional leadership, managing change, and improving the overall effectiveness of instruction.
- **Superintendents Network of Support**: The purpose of this collaboration between an SEA and a university is to support the work of district leaders in improving outcomes for all students. Superintendents identify the issues to be addressed, and the network serves as a resource for superintendents with districts with Priority and Focus schools.

The state expects districts to be the first line of support for the lowest performing schools and provides training to district leadership teams to fulfill this role. Districts provide technical assistance at every point prior to submission of school improvement plans to the state. The state provides a rubric for districts to use as they review school plans and requires districts to submit copies of their completed rubric to demonstrate that assistance has been provided. The state then conducts an independent review and returns feedback to the district and school. Where there are differences in state and local scoring of the rubric, the state returns the plan for further discussion and revisions. This design encourages a capacity-building relationship between the state and district and between the district and school.

ISDE will only approve district and school plans that ensure alignment of funds with school improvement plan priorities. Plans deemed to be lacking alignment will not be approved, and districts will be expected to revise them at the district and/or school level as necessary.

[6]ESEA requires states to establish statewide systems of support to assist LEAs and schools not making adequate progress.

The state brokers resources to ensure that schools and districts are matched with the supports they need, such as external expertise or training opportunities available from ISDE or institutions of higher education. If a school is struggling with meeting the needs of ELLs, the state's Title III coordinator reviews the school improvement plan and provides feedback. If the state has provided all of the technical assistance and support described in the ESEA Flexibility Plan and a school has not met the exit criteria by the end of the third year in priority status, the district is considered to be responsible.

At times, districts are in need of improvement due to governance issues that can be changed by coaching of the superintendent and cabinet level staff. For this, the state will utilize support mechanisms to provide coaching. However, district leaders may not have the capacity or may be unresponsive to external support. In this situation, the state will work directly with the local school board to make recommendations regarding staffing. Recommendations may be paired with positive or negative incentives for change, such as providing extra grant funding to solve specific concerns or withholding funding until conditions are met. In rare cases, district leaders have sufficient capacity and are responsive to support, but they are constrained by decision making and policies of the local school board.

In severe circumstances, the state will work directly with the community to inform stakeholders about the needs of their district, since only the local community can facilitate a change in trustee membership. Under these conditions, the state reserves the right to withhold any or all federal funding for use in providing services directly to the students, families, and community of that school district in a manner that will ultimately result in turning around the performance of the district. Such services may include, but are not limited to:

- Contracting services, such as before and after school tutoring for students;
- Providing transportation for students to other school districts;
- Enrolling students in a virtual charter school and redirecting funds to that school; or
- Reserving a percentage of funds for the state to conduct public meetings, provide public notices, and work with the public to make necessary decisions about yearly school board elections.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) uses a Progress and Performance Index (PPI) to classify schools and districts under their accountability and assistance framework.[7] The cumulative PPI is a four-year, comprehensive indicator of district and school progress towards college and career readiness, with the most recent years weighted most heavily. It is based on testing participation, student achievement, student growth/

[7]See http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/ma.pdf

improvement, and high school graduation and dropout rates. The most recent year receives a weight of four, the previous year a weight of three, the year before that a weight of two, and the year before that a weight of one. Annual PPIs are also calculated.

ESE uses three measures to assess student achievement for districts, schools, and subgroups with three indicators:

- Closing proficiency gaps in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science;
- Reducing the percentage of students scoring in the warning/failing category in ELA and mathematics; and
- Increasing the percentage of students scoring in the advanced category in ELA and mathematics.

Massachusetts assigns growth and improvement credit for:

- Exceeding the median student growth percentile (SGP) for the state;
- Increasing the group's median SGP over the previous school year; and
- Reducing the percentage of nonproficient students by at least 10% (assuming at least 30 students in the group are tested).

Massachusetts includes both graduation rates and dropout rates in the Progress and Performance Index as indicators of success in preparing students to be ready for college and careers.

The superintendent of a Priority school's district must submit a redesign plan to the local stakeholder group, local school committee, and, lastly, to the state commissioner for approval. The SEA assigns assistance liaisons and accountability monitors; defines exit criteria, including measurable annual goals tailored to each school and based on empirical data; assesses fidelity to the federal turnaround principles as well as district capacity to implement one of four federally required implementation models; and provides targeted assistance via partner providers, tools, templates, and other resources.

Massachusetts requires districts with Priority schools to develop a redesign plan to rapidly implement interventions aligned to each of the Conditions for School Effectiveness,[8] which are research-based interventions that all schools, especially those that are struggling most, need to implement to effectively meet the learning needs of every student. The District Standards and Indicators[9] identify the characteristics of effective districts in supporting and sustaining these conditions in their schools. The redesign plan takes the place of any other school improvement plan and is a multipart instrument that, for a three-year period:

- Addresses district-level capacity to support its Priority schools;
- Provides a blueprint for intervention at each identified school; and
- Sets measurable annual goals which serve as the standard for exiting priority status.

[8]http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/CSE.pdf
[9]www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/StandardsIndicators.doc

Prior to identifying interventions in Priority schools, districts must demonstrate that they have the capacity to plan for, implement, and monitor school-level redesign efforts, including the effective allocation of resources (people, time, materials, and fiscal, including all ESEA funds). In addition, the district must clearly describe:

- Their theory of action and approach to effect rapid, systemic change in its Priority schools within three years;
- The district's redesign and planning process, including descriptions of teams, working groups, and stakeholder groups involved in the planning process, especially how interventions are selected for each Priority school;
- How the district will recruit, screen, and select any external providers who provide expertise, support, and assistance to the district or to schools;
- The district's systems and processes for ongoing planning, supporting, and monitoring the implementation of planned redesign efforts;
- Their policies and practices that may serve as barriers to the implementation of the proposed plans and how those will be modified;
- How the district will ensure that the identified schools receive ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the state, district, or designated external partner organizations; and
- How the district will monitor the implementation of the selected intervention at each identified school, and how the district will know that planned interventions and strategies are working.

In addition to identifying systems, processes, and issues at the district level, the plans must also describe how the school will implement interventions aligned to the Conditions for School Effectiveness as a blueprint for school-level redesign efforts. A description of each condition and examples of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles that districts with Priority schools could implement is provided to the districts.

Because Priority schools are required to address all of these conditions at once in their redesign plans, Massachusetts has seen many of these schools rapidly transform into high functioning learning environments for students. This occurs through the redesign of school and district systems and supports, including school leadership, instruction, and family/community partnerships. It also involves a rapid diagnosis of student needs, instruction tailored to the needs of each student, and a culture of high expectations for all students, parents, and families. Prior to removing a school from Priority status, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will ensure that the capacity and conditions are in place at both the district and school levels to sustain improvement.

Tennessee

Tennessee is notable for the variety of options it offers for managing the turnaround process in Priority schools.[10] These options are intended to effectively serve students in its two large urban centers, as well as the other parts of the state.

Tennessee's Priority schools are identified every three years based on all (not just Title I) schools' three-year achievement data. Elementary and middle schools are assessed on an aggregate index of state assessment results, which equally weights the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in math, reading/language arts, and science. High schools are assessed using a weighted composite of graduation rate and percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on end-of-course exams in Algebra I, English I, English II, and Biology I.

In the short-term, identified Priority schools face one of four types of interventions:

1. Enter the state-run Achievement School District (ASD);
2. Enter an LEA-run "innovation zone" (affords schools flexibilities similar to those provided by the ASD) that an LEA has applied to create and that the state has approved;
3. Apply and be approved by TDOE to adopt one of four SIG turnaround models; or
4. Undergo LEA-led school improvement planning processes, subject to direct ASD intervention in the absence of improved results.

By 2014–15, all Priority schools will be served through one of the first three options.

The Achievement School District

The Achievement School District (ASD) was created as a division of the state's department of education. It is modeled after Louisiana's Recovery School District and has the ability to take over and operate persistently poor-performing schools or to authorize charter schools.

The primary functions of the ASD fall into five categories; the first two involve state-level work and the last three, school-level work. The categories and some kinds of activities that fall under each include:

- Oversight, when necessary, for compliance (identifying schools to enter the ASD, selecting intervention strategies, holding schools accountable for results and compliance);
- Facilitation (developing policy, overseeing public affairs);
- Human Capital (hiring and evaluating teachers and leaders);

[10]For Tennessee's Flexibility Request, see http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/tn.pdf

- Operations (transportation, food service, technology, maintenance); and
- Support (instructional services, professional development, grants administration).

The ASD employs two primary intervention strategies to dramatically increase student achievement: convert the school into a charter school or replace the LEA and directly manage daily operations of the school. In the case of direct-run conversions, the ASD's role is to:

- Invest heavily in recruiting and in human capital management in order to secure a highly effective school staff;
- Hire the turnaround team (principal and lead teachers) at least six months in advance to allow for a robust induction program;
- Employ charter-like flexibility and autonomy over personnel, budget, schedule, and program; and
- Maintain tight control over scope and sequence, assessments, professional development, and performance management.

Among the identified Priority schools, the ASD determines which schools to absorb based on (1) student achievement growth and (2) feeder pattern analysis. Priority schools that are geographically clustered with the worst growth are the first candidates for an ASD conversion.

Consistent with state law, the use of the full per-pupil funding, facilities, and transportation services for all students within the school are accessible to the ASD. The ASD controls local, state, and federal funding attributable to each school placed in its jurisdiction and has the same authority to seek, expend, manage, and retain funding as that of an LEA. In addition, the ASD has the right to use any school building and all facilities and property otherwise part of the school and recognized as part of the facilities or assets of the school prior to its placement in the ASD.

In ASD direct-run schools, the ASD has the authority to select, hire, and assign staff to positions in the school as needed to support the highest possible quality faculty in the school. All existing staff within an ASD school must reapply for a position with the ASD. The ASD has the same salary autonomy and flexibility afforded any LEA. Schools enter the ASD for a period of at least five years, with return of the management of the school subject to both the school and the home LEA meeting performance goals.

LEA Innovation Zones

Reflecting their belief that whenever possible, LEAs should be the point of intervention with failing schools, the state may permit LEAs to establish innovation zones that have similar flexibilities to the state-run ASD. These allow for greater local innovation in turning around the worst schools.

Creating an LEA innovation zone creates capacity within the LEA to successfully build upon the turnaround strategies implemented by the ASD and ensure

the long-term sustainability of student achievement gains at the campus level once the school is returned to the LEA.

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) may approve and support the creation of LEA-directed innovation zones. TDOE may flow federal and state funding ear-marked for Priority schools to the LEA if the LEA has: (1) developed a clear, realistic plan for developing an innovation zone and (2) demonstrated evidence that the LEA will be able to afford the innovation zone the necessary flexibility to be effective (e.g., new policies adopted by school boards).

The responsibilities of the LEA are to establish an innovation zone office and hire a leader with the authority to hire staff (at minimum, one full-time employee per Priority school and one full-time data analyst for the office). The LEA must allow innovation zone schools autonomy over financial, programmatic, staffing, and time allocation decisions.

Among other tasks, the innovation zone office:

- Establishes and monitors progress toward goals and timelines (the state also monitors progress annually through annual measurable objectives [AMOs] and on-site visits by state officials);
- Administers SIG and other grants;
- Pursues outside funding opportunities; and
- Provides technical assistance directly or through external partners.

If a school's student achievement does not improve within two years, the school will be absorbed into the ASD. LEA innovation zones that have slower rates of improvement across schools than the ASD will lose the right to expand into new schools until achievement growth in the rest of their schools improves to ASD levels.

Washington State

Washington identifies Required Action Districts (RAD) that have persistently low-achieving schools if those districts/schools did not apply for SIG funding. Washington established stringent criteria and monitoring to address the needs of these districts and schools.[11]

Washington's accountability system incorporates the use of an index to identify chronically low-performing schools for turnaround. The index incorporates the following measures over a period of years: (a) performance on state assessments in reading, mathematics, science, and writing; (b) graduation rates; and (c) student growth in reading and mathematics. Results for (a) and (b) are disaggregated by subgroup.

Washington State's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) identifies two sets of Priority Schools: those that have received federal School Improvement Grants, and those that have not. SIG Priority schools undergo an academic performance audit and develop an action plan that addresses the audit

[11] For more information, see http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/wa.pdf

findings and employs one of the four SIG improvement models, which must be approved by the state.

Washington requires low-performing schools that do not receive SIG funds to develop and implement action plans that include rigorous interventions and are monitored by an external liaison. A district with at least one persistently lowest achieving school is designated as a RAD. A series of required steps then follows:

1. The district notifies parents that the school has been identified for required action.
2. OSPI contracts with an external review team to conduct an academic performance audit of the district and each persistently lowest achieving school within the district.
3. RADs must then collaborate with administrators, teachers, other staff, parents, students, and unions to write a required action plan. The plan must include:
   a. An application for a SIG that includes a plan to implement one of the four federal intervention models;
   b. A budget that provides adequate resources to implement the plan;
   c. A description of the changes in the district's and school's policies, structures, agreements, processes, and practices that are necessary to attain significant achievement gains for all students;
   d. A plan to adequately remedy all the findings in the academic performance audit; and
   e. Identification of the measures the district will use to assess student achievement in at least reading and mathematics.
4. RADs must reopen collective bargaining agreements to make changes to the terms and conditions of employment necessary to implement the plan.

If a district does not receive state approval for a required action plan, that district's Title I funds may be redirected based on the academic performance audit findings. The SEA provides RADs with technical assistance and federal SIGs or other federal funds for school improvement, if available, to implement an approved plan. The RAD is required to report progress to the SEA.

A district may be released from RAD status after it (a) has implemented the required action plan for three years, (b) has made progress in reading and mathematics over the past three years, and (c) no longer has a school identified as persistently lowest achieving. If the RAD has not met the requirements for release, the district remains in RAD status and must submit a new or revised required action plan.

Schools identified for SIG or Priority school status based on their mathematics and reading (combined) performance must: (1) increase performance in

reading and mathematics in the all students group and for all subgroups for three consecutive years and (2) decrease the percentage of students (for the all students group and subgroups) scoring at the lowest levels of performance on reading and mathematics over a three-year period.

Secondary schools that graduate students and are identified for SIG or Priority school status based on their graduation rates must (1) increase graduation rates in the all students group and for all subgroups and (2) decrease the percentage of students who drop out over a three-year period (for all students and subgroups).

Prior to removing any school from priority status, OSPI will review evidence submitted by the district around the goals on its redesign plan to ensure the district has the capacity and that conditions are in place at both the district and school levels to sustain that improvement.

Conclusions

The ESEA Flexibility process is an attempt to patch up deficiencies in NCLB while the nation awaits reauthorization of ESEA by Congress. The U.S. Department of Education's guidance and regulations assert administration priorities to maintain or elevate accountability while allowing greater state discretion in designing accountability regimes, to focus on the lowest achieving schools, and to implement turnaround principles. As with the SIG program, the state flexibility plans open a wide vista of alternative approaches that will yield valuable evaluative data to determine what, in this great laboratory, proves to work.

Action Principles

States have responded to the ESEA Flexibility requirements in a variety of ways suited to their unique contexts. Although it is too soon to know the results of their interventions, the following practices seem promising:

- Take advantage of the state-designed flexibility plan to make significant changes in the education system, and pay close attention to high-quality implementation.
- Aggressively build school and district capacity simultaneously. Providing training and technical assistance to districts as well as schools can help states maximize "bang for the buck," increase local buy-in to improvement efforts, sustain positive changes, and increase the ability of the district to work with other schools that need to improve.
- Assign districts responsibility for the improvement process in their Priority schools with consequences for failure to improve.
- Conduct comprehensive school site visits to help identify instructional, personnel, and professional development needs that must be addressed in the school's rapid improvement plan.

- Create and, with the help of the district, closely monitor implementation of a single, realistic school improvement plan in which resources are tightly aligned with identified needs.
- Convey a sense of urgency to school staff, parents, the school board, and the community. Effectively communicate to each constituency the reasons why drastic change is necessary, what the changes will be, and the consequences for continued low performance.
- Use technology to leverage sparse state resources and increase the effectiveness of the statewide system of support by making it easier to monitor improvement plan implementation, providing training and technical assistance, and making data and other resources readily available to schools.

References

Brinson, D., & Rhim, L. M. (2009). *Breaking the habit of low performance: Successful school restructuring stories.* Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Breaking_the_habit_of_low_performance.pdf

Center on Education Policy. (2008). *A call to restructure restructuring: Lessons from the No Child Left Behind Act in five states*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=175

Center on Education Policy. (2012). *AYP results for 2010–11: November 2012 update*. Washington, DC: Author.

Center on Innovation & Improvement. (2009). *Patterns of practice: A school review process*. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/districts/resources/Patterns_of_Practice2.pdf

Hassel, E. A., Hassel, B., Arkin, M. D., Kowal, J., & Steiner, L. M. (2006). *School restructuring under No Child Left Behind: What works when?* Washington, DC: Public Impact for Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496104.pdf

Hurlburt, S., Therriault, S. B., & Le Floch, K. C. (2012). S*chool Improvement Grants: Analyses of state applications and eligible and awarded schools* (NCEE 2012–4060). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Kowal, J. (2009). *Performance-based dismissals: Cross-sector lessons for school turnarounds.* Lincoln, IL: Public Impact for the Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/Performance-Based_Dismissals.pdf

Perlman, C., & Redding, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook on effective implementation of School Improvement Grants*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute/Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/handbook/

Steiner, L. (2006). *School restructuring options under No Child Left Behind: What works when? State take-overs of individual schools.* Washington, DC: Public Impact for Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org/pubs/restructuring/KnowledgeIssues1StateTakeovers.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *State and local implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Volume III—Accountability under NCLB: Interim report*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.

U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *ESEA flexibility request for window 3*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility.

U.S. Department of Education. (2013). *Total number of schools in restructuring: 2011–12*. Retrieved from http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/data-element-explorer.cfm?indicator_id=521

Leveraging Technology to Accelerate School Turnaround

Janet S. Twyman

Tremendous excitement and lofty expectations surround the use of technology in schools and its promise of increasing student achievement. As part of a comprehensive initiative to advance the transformation of American education, the Obama administration and the U.S. Department of Education are encouraging a culture of learning powered by technology (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2010). The use of technology is now as indelibly linked to the thought of schooling as the one-room schoolhouse of a century ago (i.e., the brick-and-mortar schoolhouse that online education could conceivably replace). When thinking about school turnaround in the 21st century, it is not a question of *whether* turnaround efforts should include technology but *how*.

Technology has the potential to improve schooling at all levels of the system, from the preschooler or kindergartner entering school on the first day of class, to the high school senior graduating with distance learning college credits already under his belt, to the state superintendent responsible for teaching, learning, and professional development across her state. But how do we leverage technology to reap these rewards? What is the best way for state education agencies (SEAs) to ensure each learner, each teacher, each administrator, each person involved in schooling is meaningfully included?

Let's start with what we mean by technology. Hardware, software, and digital tools and other devices are readily thought of as "technology"; however, the term actually refers to the application of knowledge and research to solve practical problems and includes the use of processes as well as tools (Clark & Salomon, 1986; Twyman, 2011). Beginning in the 1950s, the "new" computer-based educational technologies were thought to illuminate the path towards solving instructional problems (Reiser, 2012), and we have yet to give up that quest. Only

recently does there seem to be more rigorous, empirical, consistent evidence that the integration of technology truly can have a meaningful, widespread impact on learning (Lemke, Coughlin, & Reifsneider, 2009; Flecknoe, 2002; Spector, 2010). Meta-analyses of existing research are increasingly finding positive effects for the instructional use of computers, game-like curricula, and interactive simulations (Blanchard & Stock, 1999; Niemiec, Samson, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1987; Vogel et al., 2006).

To accelerate learning, we need to view technology not as the answer to our instructional woes, but as a medium to obtain better student academic outcomes. Digital and computer-based technologies are a *means* to the solution; their use is not *the* solution. It is quite important for schools and districts to not simply acquire technology but also contemplate and clarify their goals for the use of technology, asking, "What do I want to achieve using this technology, and under what conditions will it have the most benefit to students?"

The barriers to as well as recommendations for effective, sustainable technology integration within a school or district has been described extensively (see Blumenfeld, Fishman, Krajcik, & Marx, 2000; Fabry & Higgs, 1997; Gülbahar, 2007). Researchers note the importance of considering both first-order barriers such as hardware, infrastructure, and technical support (i.e., variables that are "outside" a teacher's control) and second-order barriers such as attitudes about technology, pedagogical beliefs, or resistance to change (i.e., variables that are "internal" to the teacher; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Lowther, Inan, Strahl, & Ross, 2008). Both forms of barriers must be addressed for technology to help accelerate student learning. There must be adequate infrastructure and appropriate resources. As the field of education is littered with failed initiatives, schools must focus not only on acquiring new technology but also on extensive professional development related to implementing and scaling up new technologies (Zorfass, 2001). A committed, involved leader, from the school level to the state level, must ensure that educators have the necessary resources and support and that technology-based content and tools are connected to teaching practice and the curriculum (Staples, Pugach, & Himes, 2005) and are meaningful to the school community and the community at large.

This chapter will focus on how technology—assuming adequate leadership, resources, and supports—can accelerate improved student outcomes in an SEA-driven school improvement or school turnaround endeavor. The use of technology across seven areas (i.e., learning and instruction, motivation, access, data, teacher training, systems and processes, and learning analytics) is described and supported by examples of research or exemplary programs.

The Use of Technology to Personalize Learning and Improve Instruction

Any attempt to improve student learning must be anchored in relevant, well-designed curricula and evidence-based instructional methods. Good

instructional design requires a systematic process "that includes performing content, task, and learner analyses, clearly defining the learning objectives, determining the criterion tests to assess for understanding or mastery, establishing the entry repertoire needed by the student, building the instructional sequences, using performance data to continually adjust instruction, and ensuring student motivation by incorporating both program intrinsic and extrinsic consequences throughout the instructional sequence" (Twyman & Sota, in press; see also Dick & Carey, 1996; Smith & Raglan, 1999; Tiemann & Markle, 1990; Twyman, Layng, Stikeleather, & Hobbins, 2004). Worthwhile instruction (the delivery) requires frequent opportunities for the student to actively respond (Rosenshine & Berliner, 1978) with immediate, relevant feedback (Shute, 2008) that supports self-paced progress (Fox, 2004) with new material presented only after the student has demonstrated mastery of the current material (Bloom, 1968; Keller, 1968; Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert-Drowns, 1990). The progression of instruction and content must be tied to actual measures of student learning and not portioned by curriculum content chunks such as chapters or units or the passage of grading periods, semesters, or calendar years. Any viable "technology assist" (i.e., the use of technology to make the attainment of a goal more likely) in school turnaround must support, enhance, or provide these critical components. State education leaders can prime, develop, and support a culture of selecting curriculum materials known to be effective or even promising (i.e., based on evidence-based components), as well as quickly abandoning those shown, under reliable implementation conditions, to be ineffective. States can partner with vendors who directly link outcomes to purchase costs.

Research-informed, technology-enhanced instructional programs that analyze current skills, target student deficits, and deliver tailored instruction *automatically* are increasingly prevalent.[1] A blend of real-time, data-based recommendations and teacher insight into student needs and preferences may provide an ideal framework for personalized learning that actually improves student outcomes (Thropp, Friedman, & Elliott, 2011; Wayman, 2005).

There is an ever-growing cornucopia of visually rich, well-curated content from highly respected sources and digital and Internet-based technologies that all educators may access at little or no cost, such as those by NASA or the World Wildlife Fund. The opportunities to pull in rich content and personalize offerings to student interests seems infinite, yet may be both a boon and a bane for educators. Educators must sift through and evaluate the plethora of available content and technology tools to find those that meet their teaching or their students' learning needs. The number of apps, tools, and resource sites, as well as commercial or enterprise technology programs from established educational publishers, already enormous, continues to grow, thus requiring that teachers, curriculum

[1]Current examples include Burst®, Reading by Wireless Generation®, or "Groupinator" by Scholastic's Read 180®.

specialists, technology specialists, and administrators become "educated consumers" in the technology tools and content marketplace. Quality research on effectiveness is critical, yet may be insufficient given the fast pace of technology changes (see Technology in Education, 2011). In the interim, guidelines, rubrics, or checklists of necessary or notable characteristics can be helpful in determining what to use, when, and with whom (for a collection of such resources, see Appendices in Twyman & Sota, in press).

The Use of Technology to Increase Motivation

Students who historically have had difficulty in school are less likely to engage in learning and practice opportunities (Fuchs et al., 2008). Technology can aid motivation to participate and create opportunities for more interesting and engaging activities, structuring learning for mastery-based progression, and personalizing content to suit student interests. Personalized learning has surfaced as a potential instructional strategy to increase motivation and student success (Wolf, 2012). "Serious games" and games for learning seem different from "edutainment" programs of the past, may be especially effective in increasing motivation for struggling students (Burguillo, 2010), and may offer a learning environment where feedback is less threatening (Shute, 2008).

Motivators may be "extrinsic" to instruction, such as points or awards for mastery performance. Sites that purport to enhance student motivation through digital badges (e.g., Badgeville, Mozilla's Open Badges) or behavior management apps (e.g., Class Dojo) are just a few examples of motivational technology tools. Motivators may also be "intrinsic" to instruction, arising from learning and what mastery enables the student to do in other contexts (Layng, Twyman, & Stikeleather, 2004). When an instructional sequence begins with a challenging task that a student learns successfully, it may help the student more readily approach learning in the future (Fuchs et al., 2008).

The Use of Technology to Improve Access

Arguably one of the most outstanding benefits of new technologies, such as portable digital devices and Internet-based content delivery, is the increased access all students have to these technologies. This is especially important to SEAs as they have an obligation to provide equal access and meet the needs of all students within their states. These new technologies and ubiquitous Internet availability promote the delivery of high-quality content to students in a wide range of geographical areas, including those in remote areas who previously may have been cut off from such resources. Students who temporarily or permanently are unable to attend their brick-and-mortar classrooms can remotely or virtually participate in some or all classroom activities, even in real time, via the Internet. This includes instructional activities as well as more social activities—via social networking, chat, or other tools.

Access is increased not only geographically, but also temporally, with content and instruction available 24/7, including evenings, weekends, and summers. Research indicates that students are spending substantial amounts of time learning outside of school (Mallya, Mensah, Contento, Koch, & Barton, 2012), and teachers now have the ability to integrate those learning opportunities with what is happening during school hours. Two notable examples of the tremendous benefit of technology to increase access are 1:1 technology initiatives and blended learning.

The 1:1 model, which began over a decade ago and continues to grow across the country, promotes an approach where *all* students and teachers have access to at least one wireless device with up-to-date software and an Internet connection at school, and the devices are used to improve outcomes in teaching and learning (Muir, Manchester, & Moulton, 2005; Penuel, 2006). One-to-one initiatives support a personalized learning environment where teachers use and trust digital learning opportunities to give students access to activities tailored to their specific interests and needs, and the school or district actively supports and monitors the use of devices for digital learning. While research reveals mixed results overall, studies that involve carefully implemented 1:1 initiatives have been shown to increase general learning outcomes (Warschauer, 2006; Weston & Bain, 2010). Positive results seem to be tied to four crucial factors: access (to technology); emphasis on uses for learning; strong leadership; and professional development in context. A comprehensive report by Project RED (2010) provides greater detail on the essential components required in a successful 1:1 initiative.

The Khan Academy, and its access to an on-demand library of educational videos and learning management infrastructure (Khan Academy, 2013; Noer, 2012), is perhaps the most popular example of "blended learning" or "a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home" (Staker & Horn, 2012, p. 3). For most K–12 classrooms, the "blend" of online and bricks-and-mortar typically falls into four models: rotation, flex, self-blend, and enriched virtual (for a full description of these models, as well as subtypes, see Staker, 2011; Staker & Horn, 2012). Blended learning exists within the continuum, from traditional full-time bricks-and-mortar instruction without key features of online instruction to the full-time access of all educational content via online resources and may have any combination of traditional and online learning. A critical feature, however, is that each form of instruction influences and impacts the other. Communication between teachers and students, or students and students, may be synchronous (i.e., occurring in real time) or asynchronous (i.e., interaction occurs intermittently online, with time between responses). Research indicates that models that promote communication and interaction between traditional instruction and online

instruction produce better learning outcomes. In a meta-analysis of 51 studies and a review of literature, the U.S. Department of Education found that "blended instruction has been more effective, providing a rationale for the effort required to design and implement blended approaches (2009, p. xvii).[2]

The Use of Technology to Track, Measure, Analyze, Communicate, and Respond to Data

Research has consistently shown that the frequent measurement of student progress before, during, and after teaching is reliably associated with improved outcomes (Wayman, 2005; West, 2011). Measurement indicates where students are or where they are starting from, guides teaching along the way, and, finally, shows when students have arrived at the intended destination. Historically, persistent barriers to measurement have included the difficulty of simultaneously teaching and measuring, the knowledge or awareness of what to measure, and the ability to use measurement and data to make instructional decisions.

Technology tools can reduce many of these barriers by continuously tracking student performance in real-time and providing simultaneous feedback for both the student and the teacher. Student response systems that collect data (e.g., "clickers," digital devices, programs that use smart phones) have been found to improve student understanding and increase engagement (Kay & LeSage, 2009; Poole, 2012; West, 2011). Digital tools and applications such as computers, tablets, interactive video, and whiteboards have been shown to increase the ability to collect, manage, analyze, store, and communicate educational data (McIntire, 2002; Penuel, Boscardin, Masyn, & Crawford, 2007; Wayman, 2005). Course sequences may be offered online through course management systems (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle) or a learning platform (e.g., Knewton, DreamBox Learning). When these online learning systems use data to change in response to individual student performance, they are considered adaptive learning environments (Specht, 2013).

As noted previously, "smart" algorithms provide teachers with instantaneous guidance on where students are struggling and what to do next. When embedded within an instructional program, the recommended intervention or next course of action can be automatically served up to the student (Corbett & Anderson, 1992). The resulting picture or map of student learning can be shared online with other educators, administrators, or parents. This allows real-time data to truly direct continuous improvement. These data may also be used to help educators group students with similar needs for more intensive instruction or pair students up for peer tutoring or group review.

[2]Innosight Institute has produced two comprehensive reports, *The Rise of K–12 Blended Learning: Profiles of Emerging Models* (Staker, 2011) and *Classifying K–12 Blended Learning* (Staker & Horn, 2012), that detail the types of blended learning models and describe numerous K–12 blended learning implementations across the country. Schooling leaders and those interested in a better understanding of blended learning are encouraged to consult these resources.

The Use of Technology to Improve Teacher Training

Technology can aid professional development in at least two ways: flexibility and familiarity. This is true regardless of content or instructional effectiveness. With regard to flexibility, teacher training or professional development activities that are delivered via the computer, tablet, smart phone, or other device give educators and administrators greater leeway in determining when and where professional development activities occur. Webinars and other synchronous remote delivery of professional development allow training to occur across a district while minimizing costly travel expenses. This may be particularly valuable in states with rural districts spread over large geographic areas. Tutorials, modules, trainings, or presentations, delivered asynchronously, allow educators to access content at times most convenient for their schedules, either inside or outside of schools. This flexibility also applies to professional development content and level, allowing for a personalized education experience geared to each teacher and his or her own interests and needs.

The use of technology in teacher training also benefits teachers by increasing familiarity. As previously inexperienced or reluctant teachers increase contact time with new technologies such as tablets or new software and content delivery tools such as screen casting, electronic whiteboards, video creation, or even online polling, they in turn may become more comfortable using these technologies in their classrooms (Chism, 2004; Grasha & Yanbarger-Hicks, 2000). Therefore, it is essential for schools and districts to incorporate technology content delivery tools in their professional development efforts.

A section on teacher training and technology cannot close without also addressing the need for formal training on the actual use of technology for educators and potentially all school staff. Thought leaders have expressed the need for preservice teacher training efforts related to how to use new technologies; however, such efforts are in an early stage. Research indicates that teachers who receive professional development focused on integrating technology into teaching use technology more effectively (Robyler & Edwards, 2000; Watts & Hammons, 2002), especially when that training occurs in context (Chism, 2004). Schools, districts, and SEAs need to make a concerted effort to train their educators in the fluent use of technology tools by providing both inside and outside of class experiences, preferably with experienced mentors.

The Use of Technology to Streamline Systems and Processes

Technology can streamline processes by promoting a continual multi-way flow of information between students, teachers, curriculum, subject area or other specialists, administrators, and parents within a single school, across the district, or throughout the state (Kosakowski, 1998). Learning management systems, digital grade books, educational data systems, and the linking of online assessments allow for the digitization of records and information for easy access

at a variety of levels. Information, such as student portfolios, can now be stored in the form of searchable documents, images, audio, or even digital files.

The Use of Technology to Understand Learning and Performance Analytics

As noted previously, technology greatly assists our ability to collect data and make data-driven instructional decisions (McIntire, 2002). The application of technology to the growing area of learning analytics is equally critical. Learning analytics focuses on the analysis of student interaction using online education tools and uses the information gleaned to predict outcomes and create a more integrated and customized learning experience (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2012). Using "intelligent data" on student performance, learning analytics dissect real-life data sets to find out how students learn and how to improve upon their experience. Analytics can help predict future student performance based upon patterns of learning across students, warn when students are struggling, and suggest unique feedback and intervention tailored to specific difficulties based upon collections of answers.

One of the features of learning analytics, in contrast to "typical" data collection and individualized data decision-making, is how analytics are designed to look at groups and patterns of responding in the aggregate to make bigger picture statements about how various students respond to particular instructional materials or at particular times. They can detect performance difficulties due to either instructional content (curriculum) or instructional delivery (e.g., analysis of time spent on problems or sections, patterns of corrects or errors to identify areas of concern, distinguish between guessing versus "knowing" answers; Hauger & Köck, 2007; Layng, Twyman, & Stikeleather, 2004). For example, learning analytics can identify common incorrect answers for a lesson, within or across students, and catalyze teachers to revisit the material for clarification during class or revise the material for use in future lessons. Predictive models of analytics are beginning to combine demographic information and student learning data to report progress and predict future outcomes. Adaptive engines can now customize content delivery for an individual student's performance or interest, further strengthening the personalization of learning.

The following guidelines may assist SEAs in their efforts to use technology to accelerate school turnaround efforts in their states.

Action Principles

Appoint an expert to serve in the role of "tech visionary"

- Identify an education leader with a solid, informed, and up-to-date opinion about where technology will be in the next few years to plan a roadmap for the state accordingly.

Use technology to personalize learning and improve instruction

- Leverage the clout (e.g., influence, buying power) inherent in SEAs to structure curriculum purchases directly tied to demonstrated learner outcomes (e.g., partial payment upfront with balance due upon agreed upon outcomes, partial or full refunds should expected outcomes not be attained).
- Assume a critical role in helping to identify content and instructional providers that align with the broader state curriculum and data systems.

Use technology to increase motivation

- Engender and encourage a statewide consideration of personalized learning, and support effective technology products that include higher levels of personalization.
- Establish a statewide culture of high performance expectations; leverage technology tools to provide appropriate level of performance reporting.

Use technology to improve access

- Reevaluate requirements and policies related to "seat time" to include consideration of both blended learning and fully online courses.
- Create opportunities for linkages across the state—and across states—to leverage exemplary online course content/providers for statewide access.
- Target rural and underserved areas for online access to unique content or specialized personnel.

Use technology to track, measure, analyze, communicate, and respond to data

- Identify measurement systems (tools or providers) that align with the statewide data systems and provide incentives for their use.
- Provide public access—at the parent, teacher, school, district, and state level—to socially valid educational data and provide a forum for public comment and feedback as well as a review system for performance improvement.

Use technology to improve teacher training

- Support the recruitment, retention, and development of educators who have solid educational technical expertise and experience across technical domains, implementation domains, and content domains.
- Develop statewide technology mentoring programs—at the preservice and in-service level.
- Reevaluate credentialing requirements to include training and demonstration of skills related to current technologies from creation to delivery to evaluation.
- Partner with institutes of higher education and teacher preparation programs to help them identify and include the necessary education technology knowledge and skills.

Use technology to streamline systems and processes

- Develop statewide guidelines, rules, standards, implementation protocols, training mechanisms and materials, and technology tool kits to aid districts and schools in implementing technology at both the statewide and local level.
- Provide statewide guidelines that help shape community (e.g., educator, administrator, parental) attitudes about technology, pedagogical beliefs, and potential resistance to change, while keeping the public informed of statewide technology initiatives.
- Develop state-level guidelines, rubrics, or checklists that evaluate necessary or notable characteristics of technology products, aligned to state standards, that districts, schools, and teachers can use in determining what, when, and with whom to use them.
- Designate an individual or team at the state level who is responsible for evaluating the efficiency and efficacy of technology implementations within the state, including a plan for limited tryouts in specific locations before systematic rollout across the state.

Use technology to understand learning and performance analytics

- Unify statewide student information systems that also take into account student learning, teacher performance, and the effectiveness of curriculum, as well as implementation fidelity.
- Adopt statewide, or make available at low cost to districts, data system infrastructures that standardize, collect, and track K–12 student data.

References

Blanchard, J., & Stock, W. (1999). Meta-analysis of research on a multimedia elementary school curriculum using personal and video-game computers. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 88*, 329–336.

Bloom, B. S. (1968). Learning for mastery. *Evaluation Comment, 1*(2), 1–12.

Blumenfeld, P., Fishman, B. J., Krajcik, J., & Marx, R. W. (2000). Creating usable innovations in systemic reform: Scaling up technology-embedded project-based science in urban schools. *Educational Psychologist, 35*(3), 149–164.

Burguillo, J. C. (2010). Using game theory and competition-based learning to stimulate student motivation and performance. *Computers & Education, 55*(2), 566–575.

Chism, N. (2004). Using a framework to engage faculty in instructional technologies. *Educause Quarterly, 27*(2), 39–45.

Clark, R. E., & Salomon, G. (1986). Media in teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.; pp. 464–478). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Corbett, A. T., & Anderson, J. R. (1992). Student modeling and mastery learning in a computer-based programming tutor. In C. Frasson, G. Gauthier, & G. McCalla (Eds.), *Intelligent Tutoring Systems: Second international conference proceedings* (pp. 413–420). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Dick, W., & Carey, L. (1996). *The systematic design of instruction* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishing.

EdWeek. (2011). *Technology in Education*. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/technology-in-education/

Ertmer, P. A. (2005). Teacher pedagogical beliefs: The final frontier in our quest for technology integration? *Educational Technology Research and Development, 53*(4), 25–39.

Ertmer, P. A., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. T. (2010). Teacher technology change: How knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and culture intersect. *Journal on Research on Technology in Education, 42*(3), 255–284.

Fabry, D. L., & Higgs, J. R. (1997). Barriers to the effective use of technology in education: Current status. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 17*(4), 385–395.

Flecknoe, M. (2002). How can ICT help us to improve education? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 39*(4), 271–279.

Fox, E. J. (2004). The personalized system of instruction: A flexible and effective approach to mastery learning. In D. J. Moran & R. W. Malott (Eds.), *Evidence based educational methods* (pp. 201–221). San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., Powell, S. R., Seethaler, P. M., Cirino, P. T., & Fletcher, J. M. (2008). Intensive intervention for students with mathematics disabilities: Seven principles of effective practice. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 31*, 79–92.

Gammon, R. (2011, July 15). *itunes app store educational apps 2011 vs. 2009*. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from http://lh-llc.com/itunes-edu-apps-2011–2009

Grasha, A., & Yanbarger-Hicks, N. (2000). Integrating teaching styles and learning styles with instructional technology. *College Teaching, 48*(1), 2–10.

Gülbahar, Y. (2007). Technology planning: A roadmap to successful technology integration in schools. *Computers & Education, 49*(4), 943–956.

Hauger, D., & Köck, M. (2007, September). S*tate of the art of adaptivity in e-learning platforms*. In Workshop Adaptivität und Benutzermodellierung in interactiven Systemen (ABIS'07). Retrieved from http://users.informatik.uni-halle.de/~lwa07/abis07/Hauger.pdf

Khan Academy. (2013). *A free world-class education for anyone anywhere*. Retrieved from http://www.khanacademy.org/about#faq

Kay, R. H., & LeSage, A. (2009). Examining the benefits and challenges of using audience response systems: A review of the literature. *Computers & Education, 53*(3), 819–827.

Keller, F. (1968). "Goodbye teacher..." *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1*, 79–89.

Kosakowski, J. (1998). *The benefits of information technology*. ERIC Digest. Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology. (ED 420302)

Kulik, C., Kulik, J., & Bangert-Drowns, R. (1990). Effectiveness of mastery learning programs: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 60*, 265–299.

Layng, T. V. J., Twyman, J. S., & Stikeleather, G. (2004). Selected for success: How Headsprout Reading Basics™ teaches beginning reading. In D. J. Moran & R. Malott (Eds.), *Evidence-based educational methods* (pp. 171–200). St . Louis, MO: Elsevier Science/Academic Press.

Lemke, C., Coughlin, E., & Reifsneider, D. (2009). *Technology in schools: What the research says.* Culver City, CA: Commissioned by Cisco. Retrieved from http://www.cisco.com/web/strategy/docs/education/tech_in_schools_what_research_says.pdf

Lowther, D., Inan F., Strahl J., & Ross S. (2008). Does technology integration "work" when key barriers are removed? *Educational Media International, 45*(3), 195–313.

Mallya, A., Mensah, F. M., Contento, I. R., Koch, P. A., & Barton, A. C. (2012). Extending science beyond the classroom door: Learning from students' experiences with the Choice, Control and Change (C3) curriculum. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*.

McIntire, T. (2002). The administrator's guide to data-driven decision making. *Technology & Learning, 22*(11), 18–28, 32–33.

Muir, M., Manchester, B., & Moulton, J. (2005, Summer). Special topic: Learning with laptops. *Educational Leadership, 62*. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/summer05/vol62/num09/Special_Topic@_Learning_with_Laptops.aspx

NASA. (n.d.). *Connect and collaborate with NASA*. Retrieved from http://www.nasa.gov/connect/apps.html

Niemiec, R., Samson, G., Weinstein, T., & Walberg, H. J. (1987). The effects of computer based instruction in elementary schools: A quantitative synthesis. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education, 20*(2), 85–103.

Noer, M. (2012, November 19). One man, one computer, 10 million students: How Khan Academy is reinventing education. *Forbes*. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnoer/2012/11/02/one-man-one-computer-10-million-students-how-khan-academy-is-reinventing-education/

Penuel, W. R. (2006). Implementation and effects of one-to-one computing initiatives: A research synthesis. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 38*, 329–348. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ728908.pdf

Penuel, W. R., Boscardin, C. K., Masyn, K., & Crawford, V. M. (2007). Teaching with student response systems in primary and secondary education settings: A survey study. *Educational Technology Research & Development, 55*, 315–346.

Poole, D. (2012). The impact of anonymous and assigned use of student response systems on student achievement. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research, 23*(2), 101–112.

Project RED. (2011). *The technology factor: Nine keys to student achievement and cost-effectiveness.* Retrieved from http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/downloads/ProjectRED_TheTechnolgyFactor.pdf

Reiser, R. A. (2012). What field did you say you were in? Defining and naming our field. In R. A. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology* (3rd ed.; pp. 2–9). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Rosenshine, B. V., & Berliner, D. C. (1978). Academic engaged time. *British Journal of Teacher Education, 4*(1), 3–16.

Robyler, M. D., & Edwards, J. (2000). *Integrating educational technology into teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Shuler, C. (2012). *iLearn II: Addendum, an analysis of the games category of the iTunes App Store*. New York, NY: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.

Shute, V. (2008). Focus on formative feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(1), 153–189.

Smith, P., & Ragan, T. (1999). *Instructional design* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Specht, M. (2013). *Adaptive learning environment.* Retrieved from http://dspace.ou.nl/bitstream/1820/4796/1/Adaptive%20learning%20environment%20-%20Telearn%20Thesaurus.pdf

Spector, J. M. (2010). An overview of progress and problems in educational technology. *Interactive Educational Multimedia, 3*, 27–37.

Staker, H. C. (2011). *The rise of K-12 blended learning: Profiles of emerging models.* San Mateo, CA: Innosight Institute. Retrieved from http://www.innosightinstitute.org/innosight/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/The-Rise-of-K-12-Blended-Learning.pdf

Staker, H. C., & Horn, M. B. (2012). *Classifying K–12 blended learning*. San Mateo, CA: Innosight Institute. Retrieved from http://www.innosightinstitute.org/innosight/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Classifying-K-12-blended-learning2.pdf

Staples, A., Pugach, M. C., & Himes, D. (2005). Rethinking the technology integration challenge: Cases from three urban elementary schools. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 37*(3), 285–311.

Thropp, S. E., Friedman, M., & Elliott, M. (2011, January). *Personal Learning Environment (PLE): A learner and data centric approach*. In The Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation & Education Conference (I/ITSEC; Vol. 2011, No. 1). Arlington, VA: National Training Systems Association.

Tiemann, P. W., & Markle, S. M. (1990). *Analyzing instructional content: A guide to instruction and evaluation*. Seattle, WA: Morningside Press.

Twyman, J. S. (2011). Emerging technologies and behavioural cusps: A new era for behaviour analysis? *European Journal of Behavior Analysis, 12*(2), 461–482.

Twyman, J. S., Layng, T. V. J., Stikeleather, G., & Hobbins, K. A. (2004). A non-linear approach to curriculum design: The role of behavior analysis in building an effective reading program. In W. L. Heward et al. (Eds.), *Focus on behavior analysis in education* (pp. 55–68). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/ Prentice-Hall.

Twyman, J. S., & Sota, M. S. (in press). Educational technology and RtI: Affordances and considerations. In S. K. Jimerson, M. K. Burns, & A. M. VanDerHeyden (Eds.), *The handbook of response to intervention: The science and practice of multi-tiered systems of support* (2nd ed.). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer Science.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development. (2009). *Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. (2010). *Transforming American education: Learning powered by technology*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. (2012). *Enhancing teaching and learning through educational data mining and learning analytics: An issue brief*. Washington, DC: Author.

Vogel, J. J., Vogel, D. S., Cannon-Bowers, J., Bowers, C. A., Muse, K., & Wright, M. (2006). Computer gaming and interactive simulations for learning: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 34*, 229–243.

Warschauer, M. (2006). Going one-to-one: The experiences of cutting-edge schools suggest the whys, the why nots, and the hows of laptop learning programs. *Learning in the Digital Age, 63*(4), 34-38. Retrieved from http://pdonline.ascd.org/pd_online/tis_tb/el200512_warschauer.html

Wayman, J. C. (2005). Involving teachers in data-driven decision-making: Using computer data systems to support teacher inquiry and reflection. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk, 10*, 295–308.

West, D. (2011). *Using technology to personalize learning and assess students in real-time*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Weston, M. E., & Bain, A. (2010). The end of techno-critique: The naked truth about 1:1 laptop initiatives and educational change. *Journal of Technology, Learning, and Assessment, 9*(6). Retrieved from http://escholarship.bc.edu/jtla/vol9/6/

Wireless Generation. (2009). *Science to solution: Research support for the Burst®:Reading Approach to reading intervention*. Retrieved from http://www.wirelessgeneration.com/pdf/white-papers/BR_White_Paper_0510.pdf

Wolf, M. A. (2012). *Culture shift: Teaching in a learner-centered environment powered by digital learning*. Digital Learning Series. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

World Wildlife Fund. (n.d.). *The world's most amazing animals in one app*. Retrieved from http://worldwildlife.org/pages/the-world-s-most-amazing-animals-in-one-app

Zorfass, J. (2001). Sustaining a curriculum innovation: Cases of make it happen! In J. Woodward & L. Cuban (Eds.), *Technology, curriculum, and professional development: Adapting schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities* (pp. 87–114). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Evaluating the State Turnaround Strategy

Daniel Aladjem

Evaluation resources, especially for evaluating school reform, improvement, and turnaround, abound and are readily available on the internet. Resources range from general, introductory, evaluation texts (e.g., Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2010) to resources focused directly on helping states evaluate their turnaround efforts (Herman, Aladjem, & Walters, 2011). Both types of resources can play important roles in improving the implementation as well as outcomes of turnaround efforts. Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer provide a concise introduction to all aspects of evaluation. As such, it is an invaluable resource for every evaluation effort. Herman, Aladjem, and Walters, on the other hand, provide specific examples of how a state might think about evaluation of federally funded School Improvement Grants (SIG). This chapter takes a different approach. Aside from avoiding replicating prior work, this chapter seeks to address a different aspect of evaluation. Rather than explore how to evaluate SIG efforts per se, this chapter will provide examples of how states evaluate *their own* work to implement SIG. The object of evaluation for this chapter is not the schools, teachers, or students who ultimately benefit from SIG, but the work of states *themselves*. The central questions motivating this chapter are: "How can states be reflective about their own practice?" and "What lessons can states learn from other states?"

This chapter consists of three main sections. The first section will review briefly the literature on evaluating SIG and provide a simple conceptual framework for this chapter. Next, the heart of the chapter will provide examples from several states of how they have thought about their own work supporting SIG implementation and outcomes and present lessons learned from these efforts. This section is organized topically, rather than by state, as what individual states learned is less important than the patterns of their lessons that might be

generalized to benefit all states. Finally, a brief summary precedes a few pointed action principals for states.

Literature Review

The literature on evaluating school turnaround focuses primarily on the implementation and outcomes of turnaround interventions in schools. Within the literature on school turnaround (for the purposes of this chapter we ignore the broader literature on school reform and improvement that clearly has implications for any school turnaround effort), there are two categories of scholarship that bear directly on the question of evaluating state turnaround efforts. First is the broad analytic work on turnaround. Second are the few empirical studies to date of state turnaround efforts. In lieu of evaluation guidance, the federal government has enumerated a set of indicators of school performance and required states to submit data reflecting these indicators. While important metrics, these federally required data do not—and do not purport to—shed much light on the contribution of state activities to the accomplishment of desired turnaround outcomes.

The broad literature on school turnaround goes further than the federally required turnaround indicators by providing more context and nuance on the selection, application, and interpretation of indicator and evaluation strategies. Two reviews on evaluating turnaround are particularly useful. First is Kowal and Ableindinger's (2011) look at leading indicators of school turnaround. Kowal and Ableindinger approached the problem of identifying leading indicators by examining the process used outside education, including venture capital, franchising, and industrial research and development. From the experience of these other fields, they identified "key principles and processes to guide the design and use of leading indicators in education"(p. 1): identify a set of starting leading indicators, "zealously" monitor, and act on the data. To select leading indicators, Kowal and Ableindinger recommended selecting indicators that are "based on known success factors," "constantly evolving" to better predict success, "tailored to specific circumstances," and "based on specific timetables" (p. 2). School and districts in turn should monitor progress frequently and on an ongoing basis. Program monitors need to be hands-on in monitoring activities, and monitors need to tailor monitoring based on the information they collect. With data from leading indicators in hand, Kowal and Ableindinger recommended actions ranging from state and/or district intervention that may take varied forms from targeted assistance to major changes, such as withdrawing financial support to providing increased autonomy for successful progress. They applied these principles and provided an initial set of leading indicators.

Kutash et al. (2010) provided an overview of school turnaround more broadly, examining not only indicators and metrics of success but also funding, prevalent models of turnaround, and key actors. The objective was to provide

a primer on turnaround in order to promote the success of turnaround efforts. They based the report on interviews with turnaround experts and published reports and articles. Looking only at the treatment of measuring success, Kutash et al. defined school and system success. They defined school success as determining what to measure, identifying how to measure it, setting benchmarks, and establishing a timeline. They defined systems success as setting turnaround-specific goals, tracking performance of all schools, evaluating districts' support for turnaround, and finding and sharing best practices.

While neither Kowal and Ableindinger (2011) nor Kutash et al. (2010) directly address the thrust of this chapter, they present worthy starting points for looking at turnaround evaluation issues generally. Two empirical studies directly inform the central issue of this chapter. First is a look at Washington's early experience implementing its SIG award. The second study, which is ongoing, examines Michigan's SIG experience.

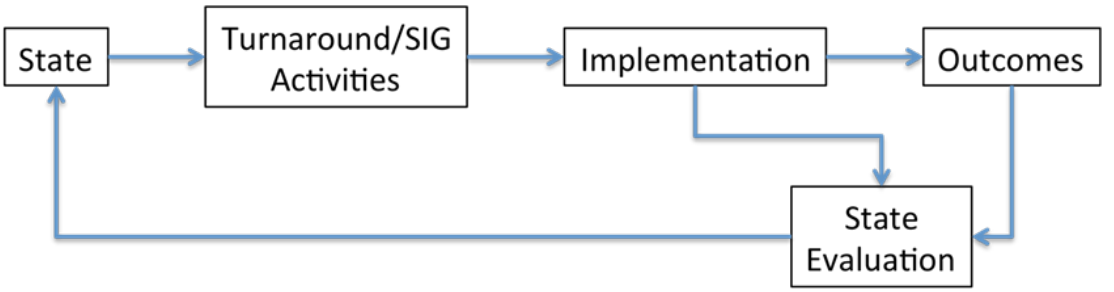
Washington's early experience stands as a cautionary tale of potential implementation pitfalls. Yatsko, Lake, Nelson, and Bowen (2012) described implementation of the SIG awards as being very much like prior school reform efforts, with few, if any, of the bold or transformative changes one might have expected to see in SIG schools. They attributed this disappointing observation primarily to rushed and tentative implementation at the district level, driven by "politics, fear of controversy, lack of knowledge, and the constraints of collective bargaining" (p. 6). They observed, moreover, districts too focused on compliance and generally lacking the capacity to undertake the ambitious agenda of turnaround. Schools were found lacking focus on turnaround strategies and mired, instead, in "'kitchen sink' improvement strategies" (p. 17). They observed the SEA as a compliance monitor rather than a problem-solving turnaround partner supporting districts.

Contrast Washington's experience with Michigan's. Bojorquez, Rice, Hipps, and Li (2012) examined the first year of Michigan's SIG awards. In contrast to Washington, Bojorquez et al. documented changes to governance and leadership in SIG schools, although district level changes to governance and leadership were more limited. They reported changes to human capital management and monitoring consistent with their expectations for the first year of SIG awards. Additionally, they noted changes in teacher expectations about reform in the guise of turnaround; turnaround was not to be "business as usual." One manifestation of this was reportedly higher levels of collaboration among school stakeholders.

Taken together, this literature suggests a simple framework for this chapter. Figure 1 shows the path by which state evaluation efforts can improve turnaround implementation and outcomes. States specify certain turnaround/SIG activities that they implement directly and through third parties. These implementation activities lead to outcomes. State-sponsored evaluations collect data

from the implementation activities and outcomes (the arrows pointing to the state evaluation box). Evaluation, in turn, informs state decision makers and can result in revised turnaround/SIG activities and ultimately better outcomes.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



States will vary in their approaches to turning around low performing schools, even when doing so with resources from the federal SIG program. Approaches to evaluating school-level turnaround are many (see, e.g., Herman, Aladjem, & Walters, 2011). The literature on school improvement, both more traditional whole school approaches (Aladjem et al., 2006) as well as early work on school turnaround (Aladjem et al., 2010), suggest the importance of external support, particularly from states and districts. What states do to support reform, particularly ambitious reforms like turnaround, matters. Evaluation of school level activities, challenges, and successes is incomplete without also looking at how states support turnaround.

Lessons Learned

While the research literature offers much about evaluation of turnaround and a bit about the experiences of some states, preliminary stories from additional states offer lessons for state leaders thinking about the implications of their own activities. Four broad lessons are emerging from the states:

- Data are key, but turning data into information requires thought and care.
- Strong, professional relationships between and among key actors at all levels (school, district, state) that are focused on turnaround can greatly facilitate progress.
- Turnaround involves many aspects of the system, thereby making alignment and coherence within states even more essential.
- Timing is everything.

This section describes each of these lessons learned.

Data Do Not Necessarily Provide Information for Action

Federal data requirements focus less on end outcomes than putative leading indicators. The federal government requires states to submit data informing nine leading indicators of turnaround performance. These metrics count activities/events at the school level and district level. None speaks to the role of any key

actor in achieving improved school performance. Information about the role of state or other technical assistance to turn around low-performing schools is not one with a broad base of support. A further challenge to states hoping to track and use data from these indicators is that some states have faced difficulty collecting quality data. There are multiple sources of data quality issues. Among the sources of data quality issues are varying/inconsistent definitions of some of the metrics within and across districts and states, existing data reporting systems were not designed for some of the indicators (e.g., the distribution of teachers by performance level), and the fact that most schools are not subject to these reporting requirements, so schools and districts lack the incentive to build the capacity to provide high-quality data. Consequently, many states have found themselves awash in data but lacking information upon which to act based on those data.

Michigan, for example, has managed to collect substantial data on student achievement and school progress, but it has not always been clear how to use the data, especially to reflect on state activities. Even using the data at the school level has demonstrated the need to have someone translate the data into meaningful information for teachers and schools.

In Massachusetts, the wealth of data on school turnaround has highlighted the importance of knowing when to listen to the data and knowing when it might be misleading. Leaders in Massachusetts have seen multiple case studies of schools that appeared to make quick, dramatic gains, only to regress. The most interesting data to policymakers tend to be lagging indicators—student achievement—not the leading indicators that practice or school conditions may have changed.

Virginia's experience similarly highlighted the importance of caution in interpreting many indicators. Virginia has found many leading indicators difficult to interpret and use because the research underlying them is questionable or missing. For example, Virginia officials have expressed concern over how to interpret teacher attendance rates: is 80% attendance high or low? Who is in the classroom when the teacher of record is absent? Instead, Virginia places greater emphasis on lagging indicators, especially reading at grade level. By simplifying the data used, Virginia can streamline data collection, improving not only their own decision making, but reducing unnecessary burdens on all.

While collecting and using data presents certain challenges, building robust relationships between districts and states seems critical to successful evaluation of state SIG grantmaking.

States Can Move Beyond Compliance Monitoring to Sharing Responsibility for Turnaround

States have addressed data issues in part by changing the nature of their relationships with districts. These transformed relationships can be powerful

ways to improve state practice. Traditionally, states would focus on monitoring district compliance with grant regulations. Monitoring visits and reports can be important tools and need to be part of a state's turnaround plan. Massachusetts, for example, has found it helpful to conduct structured monitoring site visits early in the school year and use the findings to support the renewal application process. By using monitoring in this way, schools in Massachusetts have been able to reflect on the monitoring findings and tell the state how they plan to address issues and build on successes identified through monitoring. In this way, Massachusetts has used compliance monitoring as more than a simple checklist with little effect on practice.

As Massachusetts has, other states have found that by moving from purely compliance monitor to the role of technical assistance provider or broker, they can better support district and school turnaround. Addressing turnaround as a problem for both the state and districts to solve jointly can build self-reliance at the district level and model for districts how they in turn can work with schools to drive turnaround. Mississippi ensures that districts have staff dedicated to each turnaround school to support and sustain turnaround. This is partly how Mississippi has forged relationships early on—by being candid with schools that are receiving turnaround funding because the schools are not where they need to be. The state makes clear that turnaround is something that can only be accomplished by schools, districts, and the state working together. Mississippi has been successful in building the trust required through honest dialog and following through on assurances made to districts and schools.

By building trust and shared ownership, states benefit from more open feedback on their own performance and are better able to improve the services they provide to districts. Massachusetts, for example, actively seeks feedback from districts about what schools need from the state and has committed itself to listening carefully to the feedback. Mississippi, moreover, has been candid with districts about the stakes involved in turnaround and has used public reporting of data to improve the transparency and trust of the system. Mississippi did so in part by establishing a separate office dedicated to turnaround, making turnaround a clear priority.

Turnaround Involves Many Aspects of the System, Thereby Making Alignment and Coherence Even More Essential

Trust and shared ownership have paid dividends for states moving from compliance to partnership. Partnerships between states and districts serve a purpose: school turnaround. Trust and ownership play vital roles but do not obviate the need for and importance of accountability. States have not partnered with districts for the sake of partnering. Rather, states have partnered with districts as a means to the end of successful turnaround and improved feedback to states on their own performance. The lessons from states that have successfully balanced

trust and shared ownership on the one hand with accountability on the other can be distilled into the importance of establishing alignment and coherence within a state. Aligned expectations and coherent practices and objectives have allowed states to establish trust and shared ownership while creating a statewide culture of reciprocal accountability: schools and districts are accountable for turning around underperforming schools, and districts and the state are accountable for resources and support for schools and districts.

As noted, Massachusetts actively seeks feedback from districts about its own performance. Massachusetts does not shy away from pushing back if schools are not equally forthcoming about the challenges they face and their plans for meeting the challenges. Massachusetts insists that districts also need to reflect on their support for grantee schools around what works, how they differentiate support for low-performing schools, and how they plan to sustain the work once federal SIG grants end.

In North Carolina, the state has worked diligently to bring districts and schools into alignment. The importance of this became most evident as districts that had strong ties to all stakeholder groups made greater progress than districts that lacked full stakeholder buy in. Working with the latter group of districts became a priority for North Carolina. Similarly, just as some districts had great district level support, some schools in North Carolina demonstrated strong principal leadership which necessitated everything go through the principal. In other districts, schools were supportive, but districts were not. Getting districts and schools aligned and behind turnaround became a critical priority.

Data can be a key tool in aligning the major actors. North Carolina uses an online planning tool (Indistar®) that provides schools and districts with indicator data that school level teams as well as the district can use to ascertain where each school is on the federal indicators as well as their own indicators. Assessing these indicators (which are easily accessed online) has been required for each school level team, including district representatives). Many of the indicators target district, school improvement team, or principal actions. What North Carolina has found to be so effective about this is that rather than each stakeholder looking at the data independently (or worse, discussing plans without any data), schools and districts have to look at the data together. Instead of working in isolation, districts and schools can move beyond the basic question of who is responsible to the more important question of what to do. Indicators like, "The principal is a change leader" yields conversations and planning that move beyond simplistic notions of accountability towards the heart of real accountability. Best of all, from the state's perspective, the work of turnaround is guided in the direction the state wants without the state having to mandate certain activities in a heavy-handed or arbitrary way.

Timing Is Everything

State approaches to evaluation and understanding of their progress have changed over time. Massachusetts began its SIG turnaround effort uncertain how exactly to approach evaluation. The uncertainty came from the realization that first year data on student achievement would likely not yield much meaningful information. The question quickly became what could they know about both the progress of school turnaround efforts as well as how to check themselves. What kind of hard data to use was central to the dilemma Massachusetts faced.

Both Massachusetts and Mississippi resolved the dilemma by viewing both turnaround and its evaluation as a continuous process, not a single, point in time event. Mississippi knew that schools, districts, and state staff were accustomed to "someone looking over [their] shoulders." Mississippi took the attitude of not wanting to wait for perfect end outcome data but sought data to drive formative evaluation and adopted a willingness to reflect deeply on their progress and listen to outside expertise, even when outside experts delivered uncomfortable news. Mississippi found external formative evaluation particularly helpful in the process. Not only did outside expertise provide SEA personnel with much needed insight, it also modeled for districts how they needed to be open to external feedback. Mississippi accomplished this through a series of "roundtable" meetings between state officials and district staff, focused on data and conversations about the extent to which the state was meeting the needs of districts and what those district needs were.

Mississippi also credits the U.S. Department of Education with linking states' turnaround initiatives to resources for improvement. Mississippi replicated the state-to-state turnaround network with its own district-to-district network. The key for Mississippi, however, was the widespread, shared sense of urgency for turnaround. The size of the SIG grants alone made clear that results were expected, while understanding that change takes time.

One official in North Carolina summed up the importance of timing well by observing that year one was about cultural shifts, year two was about implementation of turnaround strategies and ensuring the fidelity of turnaround, and year three was about student achievement. Evaluation activities need to remain attuned to that cycle.

Summary

With so much invested in school turnaround and so much at stake in terms of students' futures, states can ill afford not to take every opportunity to ensure the success of their turnaround efforts. An important tool for doing so is the use of evaluation—evaluation that looks not just at how schools and districts are implementing turnaround and the outcomes those efforts are yielding, but evaluation that looks critically and reflectively at what states themselves are contributing to the process. This analysis leads to a discussion of how states can improve their

own support and assistance to districts and schools. In this chapter we have seen that the literature by and large ignores this important perspective, focusing instead on equally important issues of measuring implementation and outcomes. From a review of the turnaround activities of a small set of states, this chapter identified four lessons learned for states from turnaround evaluations:

- Data are key, but turning data into information requires thought and care.
- Strong, professional relationships between and among key actors at all levels (school, district, state) that are focused on turnaround can greatly facilitate progress.
- Turnaround involves many aspects of the system, thereby making alignment and coherence within states even more essential.
- Timing is everything.

Next we offer action principles for SEAs.

Action Principles

The Goldilocks Data Principle

- Evaluations are about data, analysis, and use of the findings. Most SEA staff have seen evaluations that collected the wrong data (too few data) and evaluations that collected too much data.
- The challenge is to collect the right amount and right quality data. An important tool for identifying the right data and ensuring collection of high quality data is to engage districts in structured conversations about data. If schools and districts are using the data and thereby demand the data, they are likely to provide SEAs with quality data on time. If schools and districts see data requests as just another compliance activity, SEAs (and the federal government) are not likely to get quality data and are not likely to get them in a timely fashion.

Twenty-first Century Accountability Principle

- As the states described here can testify, accountability need not be punitive. SEAs can establish (and some have done so) systems in which SEAs and districts share responsibility for turning around low performing schools.
- The Goldilocks Data Principle can be a useful way to begin to reshape the relationship between SEA and district such that each sees the other as playing an important role in turnaround.
- SEAs can model for districts how districts need to work with schools by working with districts in the same way they would have districts work with schools: acting professionally, focusing on data, taking ownership for outcomes, reflecting on practice, and committing to revised plans based on data and analysis.

References

Aladjem, D. K., Birman, B., Harr Robins, J., Orland, M., Heredia, A., Parrish, T. B., & Ruffini, S. (2010). *Achieving dramatic school improvement: An exploratory study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Aladjem, D. K., LeFloch, K. C., Herman, R., Zhang, Y., Taylor, J. E., Kurki, A.,...Carter, K. R. (2006). *Models matter—The final report of the National Longitudinal Evaluation of Comprehensive School Reform*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Bojorquez, J. C., Rice, J., Hipps, J., & Li, J. (2012). *Evaluation of Michigan's 1003(g) School Improvement Grants: Implementation trends in the first year*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

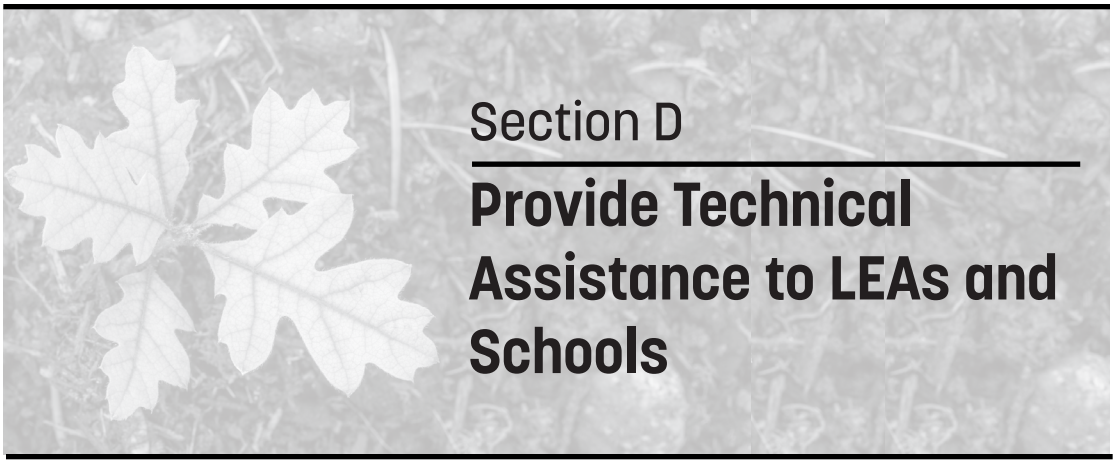
Herman, R., Aladjem, D. K., & Walters, K. (2011). Evaluating strategies to turn around low-performing schools. In I. Perez-Johnson, K. Walters, & M. Puma (Eds.), *Evaluating ARRA programs and other educational reforms: A guide for states* (pp. 39–49). Retrieved from http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/education/ARRA_eval_guide.pdf

Kowal, J., & Ableidinger, J. (2011). *Leading indicators of school turnarounds: How to know when dramatic change is on track.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia's Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education. Retrieved from http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/uploadedFiles/Darden/Darden_Curry_PLE/UVA_School_Turnaround/Leading_Indicators_of_School_Turnarounds.pdf

Kutash, J., Nico, E., Gorin, E., Rahmatullah, S., & Tallant, K. (2010). *The school turnaround field guide*. San Francisco, CA: FSG Social Impact Advisors.

Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., & Newcomer, K. E. (Eds.) (2010). *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons

Yatsko, S., Lake, R., Nelson, E. C., & Bowen, M. (2012). *Tinkering toward transformation: a look at federal School Improvement Grant implementation*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington.



Section D

Provide Technical Assistance to LEAs and Schools

Engaging State Intermediate Agencies to Support School Turnaround

Eileen Reed and Sally Partridge

The impact of increased accountability in public education is not limited to classroom teachers, principals, and district staff. The responsibility of state education agencies (SEAs) to directly support school turnaround has expanded under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), while at the same time, budget cuts and consequent staff reductions have decreased the resources available for SEAs to engage in direct technical assistance to districts and schools. In light of these contextual realities, SEAs must acknowledge the increased demands on their internal capacity and explore possible collaboration with external entities to build local capacity to support school turnaround.

A valuable partner for the SEA's consideration is the educational service agency (ESA).[1] Also referred to as intermediate agencies, ESAs can provide a critical bridge between SEAs and local education agencies (LEAs). According to the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA), ESAs exist in 45 of 50 states and play an important role in direct services and technical assistance to districts and schools.

These organizations provide SEAs and the LEAs they serve with additional capacity, amplified expertise, increased efficiency, expanded geographical impact, and expanded collaboration in the education community. Examples of services include LEA cooperatives for high cost programs, such as special education and career and technology education, and purchasing cooperatives for items such as food services, utilities, and instructional supplies. Many ESAs provide

[1]Education service agencies typically have state specific names, such as Texas regional education service centers, New York Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), Pennsylvania intermediate units, and Illinois regional offices of education. For additional information on ESAs, visit the Association of Education Service Agencies website at http://www.aesa.us

professional development services to LEAs and, in some cases, manage central office functions, such as payroll and state reporting functions.

For an SEA charged with fulfilling a variety of roles, the ESA serves as a conduit from the SEA to the LEA. State level initiatives can be quickly deployed to the LEAs through the ESAs. For example, implementation of a statewide initiative, such as a new approach to teaching reading, can be deployed through professional development provided by the ESAs to the LEAs.

While the scope of work, funding, available resources, and relationship between the SEA and the ESA varies from state to state, and sometimes even within a state, the opportunity exists for a more productive collaboration than is the current norm. In particular, we encourage SEAs to tap into the talent and resources of the system of ESAs to better meet the needs of low-performing schools.

Our recommendation is based largely on our experience in Texas where we both served in senior leadership roles at the Region 13 Education Service Center in Austin, Texas. Region 13 is one of 20 ESAs in Texas, and a very strong partnership exists between the Texas system of ESAs and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The strength of the partnership between the Region 13 ESA and the TEA will be illustrated later in the chapter within the context of a school turnaround leadership development initiative.

This chapter focuses on the role of ESAs to influence the interpretation and implementation of policies and practices to turn around low-performing schools and districts. We first present a brief review of the literature regarding the role and potential of ESAs and then describe a successful partnership between an SEA, an ESA, local school districts, and an external provider as an example of what is possible when the SEA and an ESA engage in creative collaboration to address the needs of a state's lowest performing schools. We conclude the chapter with a set of recommended action principles we propose will help SEAs effectively leverage ESAs to support their district and school turnaround priorities.

Education Service Agencies

As the traditional capacity of SEAs is hit with increased demands from national federal requirements and state legislative statutes, including developing revised systems of standards and assessment and monitoring district, campus, and teacher performance, the necessity to rely on a network of expertise and knowledge is paramount. ESAs are one resource that can assist SEAs in providing guidance and support to districts and campuses facing academic challenges. Based on her research on ESAs, University of Washington Professor Meredith Honig (2004) explains, "school district central office administrators, school principals, and other education leaders face contemporary policy demands that exceed their traditional capacity for action and, increasingly, they call on 'intermediary organizations' to help with implementation"(p. 65). This relationship is

evident where SEAs often work with organizations that provide interpretation of policy and applicable resources and support for educational practitioners charged with implementing such policy.

Honig documented that ESAs provide "new resources—knowledge, political/social ties, and an administrative infrastructure—necessary for implementation but traditionally unavailable from school district central offices or school–community partnerships and that they faced different constraining and enabling conditions in carrying out these functions" (2004, p. 66).

At one end of the continuum, ESAs may provide limited services to promote the financial efficiency of the member school districts, such as the creation and management of purchasing consortiums. At the other end of the continuum, agencies like the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) in New York state provide direct services to students. ESAs can be an invaluable partner to the SEA, especially when focused on filling the gap between the SEA capacity and LEA needs. For example, Pennsylvania's intermediate units serve the educational needs of assigned geographic areas and function as a step of the organization between the public school district and the Pennsylvania Department of Education by providing "cost-effective, instructional, and operational services to school districts, charter schools, and over 2,400 non-public and private schools" (Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units, n.d).

Based on our experience, the most successful partnerships have occurred when there is a process of co-creation between the SEA and the ESA. For example, in the Texas leadership development initiative (illustrated later in this chapter), the SEA identified the area of need, secured the funding, and then worked side-by-side with ESA staff to design the specifics of the service provided to school districts. As a result of the collaborative development process, all members of the partnership were invested in the success of the initiative, and a relationship of mutual respect and accountability was established.

Leveraging an ESA to Extend SEA Capacity

Partnerships with ESAs are essential to increase both the cost-effectiveness and the quality of the technical assistance provided to school districts. The geographic distribution of ESAs allows SEAs to leverage resources across the state. The geographic proximity of ESAs to their local school districts cultivates a level of knowledge that fosters a heightened responsiveness to specific school district needs.

When an SEA decides to partner with an ESA, it is essential there is clarity around the scope of work and that the SEA conducts a careful assessment of the ESA's ability to deliver the requested services. Additionally, the SEA needs to assess the extent to which the requested service matches the existing mission of the ESAs. For example, many states prohibit ESAs from engaging in LEA monitoring and evaluative activities. In this case, designing a scope of work for

the ESA that requires evaluating and making recommendations for the continued employment of a principal in a low-performing school would be in direct conflict with the purpose and authority of the ESA.

Once an SEA outlines a clear scope of work and conducts an assessment of the ESA's ability to provide the service, the next step in the partnership is to develop accountability measures for both organizations. This is ideally accomplished through the development of a performance contract that clearly articulates the expected services and metrics for performance, as well as communication and reporting requirements. The establishment of a project budget is an integral part of the performance contract and should be part of the ongoing reporting requirements.

The Texas Story

Texas has a long established (i.e., since 1968) system of 20 regional education service centers (RESCs) that work closely with the SEA. The role and authority of the system of RESCs is defined in statute with their mission and priority clearly articulated in the Texas Education Code (TEC) §8.002:

PURPOSE. Regional education service centers shall:

1. assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system;
2. enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and
3. implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner (p. 1).

The TEA, with limited technical assistance capability relative to the size of the geographic region for which it is responsible, relies on the system of RESCs as one of its key partners for disseminating and supporting statewide education initiatives. The collaborative relationship between the SEA and the system of RESCs is an essential and well-embedded component of the public education infrastructure in Texas.

A unique feature of the collaboration between the Texas RESCs and the SEA is the designation of lead centers for "decentralized functions." For example, the Region 13 Education Service Center (RESC 13), located in Austin, Texas, serves as the state's primary technical assistance provider for schools in improvement under NCLB. These services are provided through the Texas Center for District and School Support (TCDSS) housed within RESC 13. The TCDSS, while funded by the TEA, is physically located within and operates under the direction and supervision of RESC 13. A TEA created performance contract clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each entity as well as the major activities and deliverables. The staffs of the TEA and TCDSS meet regularly to review progress and address ongoing and anticipated needs.

Due to the number of statewide initiatives located at RESC 13, including improving the technical assistance capability of all 20 regional education service centers to better serve their region's lowest performing schools, a division (i.e., Texas Initiatives) uniquely devoted to managing statewide projects for the TEA was established by the Executive Director of RESC 13. It is led by a senior level executive who reports directly to the Executive Director.

The Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy

An example of a statewide initiative, the Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy (TTLA), was the direct result of collaboration between an ESA and the SEA and illustrates the potential benefit to local school districts when the two organizations enter into purposeful collaboration. The following sections introduce the approach Texas took to leverage ESAs to extend the SEA's capacity and describes how one of these regions served as the key force driving turnaround in the state.

An advantage of designating lead centers for special projects is the synergy of funding, expertise, and resources that can be leveraged to address identified needs. The TTLA is an example of this synergy. As the number of projects and programs at RESC 13 focused on serving the lowest performing schools in the state grew, RESC 13 recognized the need for a leadership development program focused on building the capacity of principals of low-performing schools and their district central office teams to improve the academic performance of their chronically underperforming schools.

In 2008, members of the leadership team of Texas Initiatives at RESC 13 presented a proposal to representatives of the TEA. The proposal described the need to improve the leadership skills of principals and central office staffs and outlined a concept for a leadership development program. With encouragement from the TEA, RESC 13 leaders developed a preliminary budget, and agency staff worked to successfully secure funding to develop and implement a two-year leadership development program focused on turning around some of the state's lowest performing schools.

Following funding approval by TEA, a collaborative process of co-creation with RESC 13 program staff and the TEA developed a more detailed design for the turnaround leadership development program. As in all other projects managed by RESC 13 on behalf of the TEA, performance contracts outlined the scope of work, timeline for implementation, expected outcomes, evaluation criteria, program budget, and reporting requirements. With this foundation in place, RESC 13 staff went to work to gather district input and to finalize and implement the TTLA.

Design of the Texas Turnaround Leadership Academy

The TTLA was designed by a team at RESC 13 in partnership with the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business and Curry School of

Education's Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE) turnaround specialist program. The PLE program is a two-year executive education program that focuses on building district and school leader capacity to drive and sustain dramatic change efforts in low-performing schools. RESC 13 personnel selected the PLE because of its track record of success as well as its unique focus on developing district leadership teams in addition to the campus principal.[2] The PLE program emphasizes developing district and school level leadership capacity through the implementation of policies and practices that establish the necessary environment and support needed to effectively turn around low-performing schools.

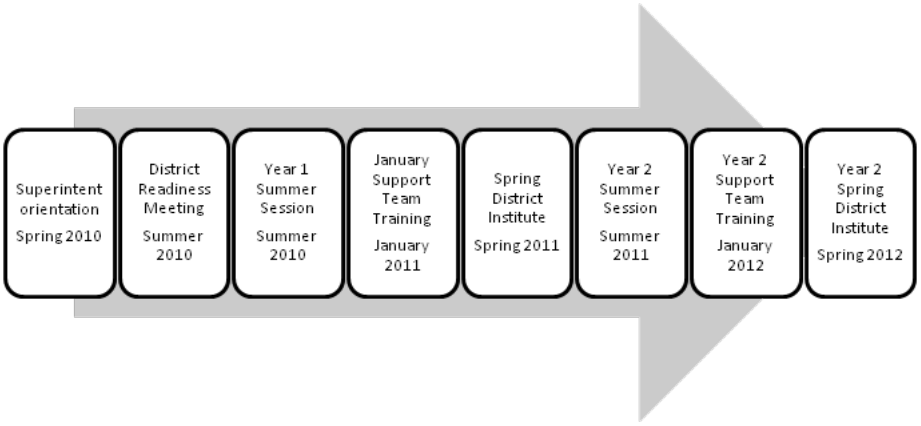
In consultation with the TEA, RESC 13 identified districts with multiple low-performing schools or schools that had been failing for multiple years. The key criteria were schools identified as 1) Title I School Improvement Program, 2) SIG recipients, and 3) those identified under the state accountability system as "academically unacceptable." RESC 13 personnel made an effort to consider geographic and district size diversity and to consider district leadership to ensure that the district would support participation in a turnaround leadership program. Once these criteria were finalized by RESC 13, eligible districts were invited to participate in the program. In the first year, 5 districts and 29 schools participated in the TTLA. After the first year, recognizing that the program did not align with the district's current school improvement strategy, one district exited the program, leaving 23 schools and 4 districts in the program.

An additional goal of the TTLA was to establish aligned leadership and systems of support at the state, regional, district, and campus level to better serve the participating schools. In designing the program, RESC 13 placed a special emphasis on reducing and streamlining reporting and other redundant requirements, such as district and school site visits and mandatory technical assistance. To accomplish this, teams from RESCs with districts participating in the program, technical assistance providers working with the schools because of their federal or state accountability designation, as well as TEA representatives, attended the various activities of the two-year program in Virginia and Texas along with the participating district and campus leaders.

The program consisted of summer training sessions at UVa and school team training sessions in Texas. The following graphic provides a snapshot of the professional development activities the participating districts engaged in over the two years of the program.

In addition to the professional development sessions, program representatives from the UVa and the TTLA formally visited districts and schools at least twice a year. Throughout the program, RESC personnel provided targeted professional development based on identified need. To provide focus to the school's

[2]For a detailed analysis of the inaugural School Turnaround Specialist Program, see Duke et al. (2005) and Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (2009).



turnaround work and site visits, principals crafted 90-day action plans throughout the two years of the program. The 90-day plan breaks the turnaround work into clear, actionable steps. Additionally, the 90-day plans were helpful for monitoring purposes and holding the principal and school teams accountable for progress.

An important design feature of the PLE is the designation of an individual to serve in the role of district shepherd. TTLA asked each participating district superintendent to designate a senior level staff member as the district shepherd. The shepherd served as the liaison between the superintendent's office and the campus principal to 1) ensure that district departments were responsive to campus turnaround efforts, 2) provide a direct line of communication to the superintendent, and 3) monitor the principal's progress on 90-day plans.

In addition to the district shepherd, TTLA assigned each participating district a case manger from the TTLA staff and an RESC liaison from the participating regions. Case managers maintained regular contact with the district shepherd and the PLE program staff. The RESC liaison assisted with access to professional development and technical assistance from the participating district's RESC.

Implementation Challenges

Leveraging the RESC network in Texas proved to be an effective approach to leveraging state resources to support a high priority initiative: school turnaround. Yet, reflecting the extent to which school change efforts rely heavily on the individuals charged with the effort, the initiative in Texas revealed two key challenges: district buy-in and identifying the right district shepherd. States interested in utilizing their ESA network to support turnaround should keep these challenges in mind.

District commitment to the TTLA project was essential to effective implementation of the program. Although each district superintendent agreed to participate in the project and meet the expectations of the program design, the high expectations for active central office engagement in the turnaround efforts

produced some consternation at the district level. For example, the district shepherd was expected to conduct meaningful weekly campus visits and hold the central office accountable for providing needed support at the campus level. For some districts, this represented a significant change in the relationship between the central office staff and campus principals.

Effectively leveraging the role of the district shepherd was a significant hurdle of the TTLA process. For instance, a number of districts named a district shepherd without fully appreciating the expectations of the role. In response to this challenge, TTLA restructured the support and technical assistance originally planned by the ESA for the turnaround campus leader to increase the training for the district shepherd and central office staff around responsibilities and purpose of the shepherd role.

Program Lessons to Date

The districts involved in the TTLA completed the program in May 2012. The lessons that emerged for TEA, RESC 13, and the participating districts were meaningful and impactful. Texas introduced new assessments in the middle of the TTLA program thereby making it difficult to discern absolute or valid impact on student outcomes. Overall, some schools demonstrated strong gains while others, in particular those schools in which the program was not fully implemented for a variety of contextual reasons, did not. While academic outcomes after two years were not as strong as anticipated, we culled lessons that have shaped practice that we anticipate will have a positive impact on schools across the state. For instance, a direct outcome at the SEA level is the redesign of accountability and support systems to enhance the district's ability to improve their own schools. The Texas Accountability Intervention System now clearly outlines commitments and provisions expected of districts regarding support for their low-performing schools, and there is a renewed emphasis on the vital role of districts in the improvement process.

The participating RESC turnaround teams directly improved their services to districts based on new learning including redesigning their school support services to reflect a greater emphasis on engaging the district central office in the improvement process. Participating districts adopted many of the practices learned in the TTLA for all of their low-performing schools such as the enhanced use of data and district-wide adoption of 90-day plans to monitor implementation of school improvement efforts.

An area that exceeded expectations as a crucial component of the TTLA was the participation of potential campus and district leaders in the Behavior Event Interview based on the identification of competencies for turnaround leadership identified by Public Impact (2008). All districts responded positively to this component of the program and voiced a need for more support about ways to effectively develop pipelines of turnaround leaders at the local and state level

based on the identification of competencies unique to working in a turnaround environment. Improving district recruitment and hiring practices for principals serving in low-performing schools has a far-reaching impact and is an area of future work for the TEA.

The TTLA is one example of how SEAs can leverage their ESAs to create initiatives to address SEA priorities. While the funding was for only one cohort of districts, the lessons learned have been far-reaching and continue to impact and inform the direction of the TEA and the RESCs as they work to meet their responsibilities in the area of school turnaround. The TEA is designing future statewide turnaround projects that build on the experiences from the TTLA and incorporate lessons learned from the Title I School Improvement Program and the federal SIG program.

Action Principles

Strengthen the role of ESAs to support the SEAs work

- Build funding for ESAs into the SEA appropriations budget.
- Define rigorous performance expectations and responsibilities of ESAs in statute in return for funding.

Promote accountability

- Create performance contracts that clearly state the scope of the turnaround work, the roles and responsibilities of each party, clear outcomes, and performance measures.
- Establish regular and ongoing reporting requirements between SEA and ESA to maintain ongoing communication, ensure project milestones are met, and to make any necessary midcourse corrections.
- Establish realistic performance measures that acknowledge the unique role and limits of the ESA.
- Establish consequences for failure to meet expectations (e.g., award contract for services to a different entity).

Select an ESA with the core competency for turnaround work

- Contract with ESAs with proven experience and ability in turning around districts and campuses. States with multiple ESAs may partner with different ESAs for individual projects, dependent on each ESAs specific areas of expertise. Include sharing of resources and information to other ESAs as part of the project requirements.
- Connect multiple ESAs, based on their strengths, into a web or network that works collaboratively to accomplish the work. For larger states, one ESA may facilitate the statewide approach to turnaround work while regional ESAs provide coordinated support to local districts and campuses.

Anticipate and prevent role confusion between the SEA and the ESA

- Clearly define how roles and responsibilities within the entities will change as new partnerships are defined. For example, will school and district site visits historically performed by SEA staff transition to ESA staff?
- Ensure the policy guidelines of the ESA support the function that the SEA is requesting the ESA to perform.

References

Christiansen, L. (2010, December). *History: Association of Education Service Agencies.* Retrieved from http://www.aesa.us/about/aesa-history.cfm

Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education. (2009). *The University of Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program: 2008 annual report*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia.

Duke, D. L., Tucker, P. D., Belcher, M., Crews, D., Harrison-Coleman, J., Higgins, L.,…West, J. (2005). *Lift-off: Launching the school turnaround process in 10 Virginia schools.* Retrieved from http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/uploadedFiles/Darden/Darden_Curry_PLE/UVA_School_Turnaround/LiftOff.pdf

Honig, M. I. (2004, Spring). The new middle management: Intermediary organizations in education policy implementation. *Educational and Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 26*(1), 65–87.

Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units. (n.d.) *What is an intermediate unit?* Retrieved from www.https://paiu.org/ius.php

Public Impact. (2008). *School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success.* For the Chicago Public Education Fund. Retrieved from http://www.publicimpact.com/publications/Turnaround_Leader_Competencies.pdf

Texas Education Code Chapter 8, Section 8.002. *Regional Education Service Centers*. Retrieved from http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.8.htm

Navigating the Market: How State Education Agencies Help Districts Develop Productive Relationships with External Providers

Julie Corbett

Despite being perceived as wholly public entities, schools, districts, and states have long utilized private companies to provide specific educational, capital, and operational services (e.g., construction, curriculum development, after-school programs, food services, entire school management; Hill, 1997). In particular, external partners have joined forces with school districts in the effort to turn around persistently low-achieving schools for decades. Generations of school improvement efforts have utilized external partners to provide a variety of supports, such as instructional strategies, social and emotional health services, and tutoring services. The engagement of external partners for the purpose of turning around schools underwent a radical shift in 2010 with the advent of the revised federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. The revamped SIG program encourages the use of external partners in a different and more comprehensive way to support the implementation of the restart, turnaround, and transformation improvement models (Corbett, 2011a; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

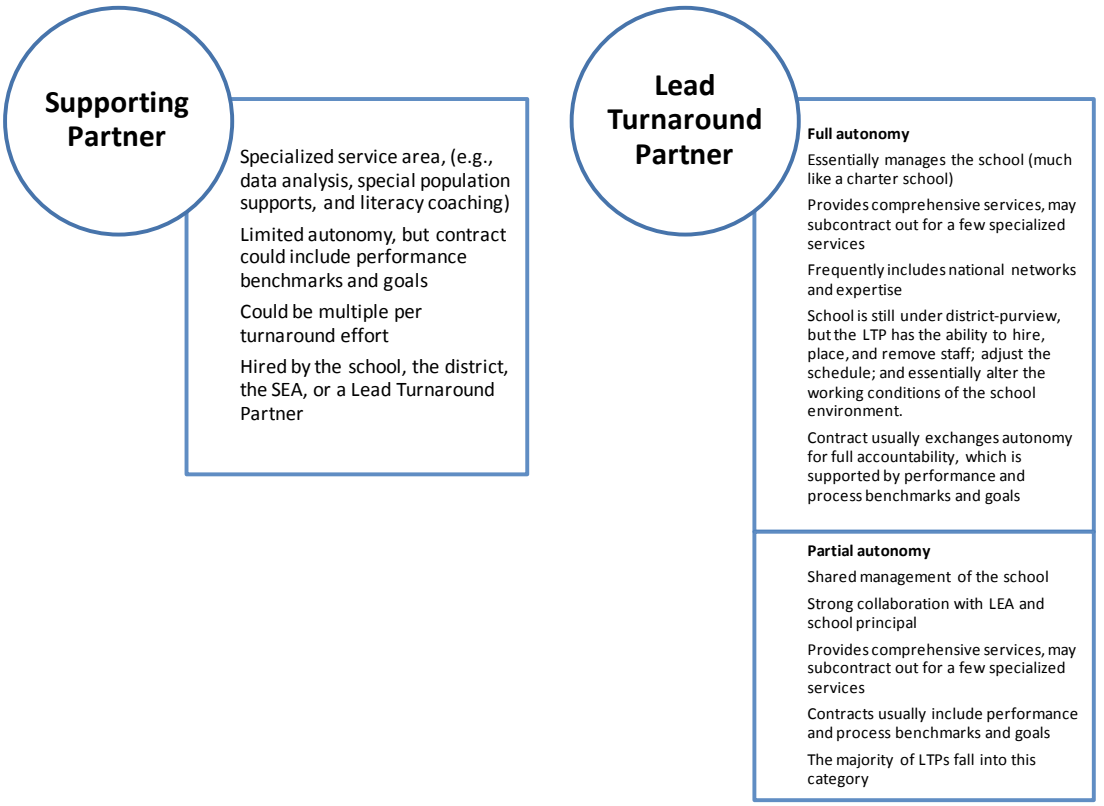
Lessons culled from contracting apply to external partners working in the turnaround environment, especially the use of performance contracts. Performance contracting ensures relationships between districts and their external partners are based on an explicit stipulation of desired outcomes and consequences for not meeting goals (e.g., cancellation of the contract). Several aspects of performance contracting are applicable to turnaround efforts and include: performance-based relationships; timelines for improvement; public reporting of results; consequences; and fiscal incentives (Center for Comprehensive School

Reform & Improvement, 2005). In effect, external partners are provided autonomy and financial profit for responsibility to meet achievement goals.

An important caveat underlying performance provisions is that these provisions are a first step, but consequences must be enforced to improve the quality of the market as a whole. With the additional scrutiny that accompanies federal grants to fund turnaround efforts, states and districts should begin to better enforce consequences for inaction or lack of improvement.

The revamped federal SIG program emphasizes the use of external entities that provide comprehensive services and are accountable for results, often referred to as a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP).[1] LTPs are one of many types of external partners able to assist and/or facilitate turnaround. While a variety of external partners support school turnaround and many of the promising practices described in this chapter apply to all types of partners, several of the examples provided focus specifically on LTPs. The types of partners working at the school or district level have varying levels of responsibility and accountability and are described in the following graphic.

Types of Turnaround Partners for Schools & Districts



[1]The concept of a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) was first coined in Mass Insight Education & Research Group's 2007 publication *The Turnaround Challenge* and is an external partner capable of managing a comprehensive school turnaround effort. While first explicitly mentioned in 2007, the LTP model resembles early contracts and partnerships between education management organizations (EMOs) and some school districts (e.g., Baltimore, Hartford, Philadelphia, Chester Upland; Rhim, 2005).

In addition to external partners working directly with schools and districts, SEAs also use external partners to support their turnaround efforts. With changes in the federal program, SEAs adapted their own practices, processes, and supports to better manage and support school turnaround efforts (Corbett, 2011a). Given limited financial and staff resources, SEAs leveraged their capacity by utilizing external partners to fill a number of specific turnaround-related roles. Such providers—companies, nonprofits, and individual consultants—assist SEAs with a variety of short- and long-term contracts, which could include:

- Developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to screen select LTPs;
- Grading and selecting preapproved LTPs;
- Scoring SIG applications from schools and districts;
- Providing technical assistance and support directly to schools or districts;
- Helping the SEA develop a Statewide System of Support (SSOS) for turnaround; or,
- Strategic planning for building a turnaround office or division (Rhim, 2011).

These consultants function much like supporting partners that work directly with schools or districts and assist with targeted, well-defined projects. In addition to the more traditional consulting role, some SEAs are providing external partners with significant responsibility and authority. A number of states have hired external partners to closely collaborate with the SEA to provide the state's system of support for schools identified as in need of improvement. In theory, the external partner manages some of the roles and tasks the SEA or regional offices performed in the past. For instance, Illinois recently awarded a contract to an external provider to support schools across the state (see more details below).

Defining the SEA Role

External partners play many different roles in school turnaround, but SEAs use similar—albeit with varying levels of intensity—practices to recruit and manage the use of external partners. On the light-touch side of the intensity spectrum, SEAs maintain a relatively hands-off approach and leave the selection of and contracting with providers to LEAs. With a moderate level of intensity, SEAs focus on recruiting and vetting partners, monitoring, and evaluating the implemented models. With increasing intensity, involvement, and oversight, a few SEAs also work to build the relationships among vendors, schools, and the state itself. While the intensity varies, the SEA's role typically falls into two primary categories:

- Recruiting and vetting external partners, and
- Monitoring relationships and holding LEAs accountable.

Recruiting and Vetting External Partners

A state-initiated RFP inviting external partners to become approved providers enables the SEA to set specific selection criteria and attract suitable, high-capacity providers for districts across the state. In addition, it allows districts to focus on establishing the right set of conditions for turnaround, as opposed to spending time recruiting and vetting partners on their own. Once an RFP is released, the SEA must evaluate the responses against an evaluation rubric aligned to the SEA's supports and needs.

Many states (e.g., Illinois, Massachusetts, Tennessee) that encourage or require districts to engage external partners for turnaround created a screened or approved list of providers from which districts choose (Corbett, 2011a; Rhim, 2011). However, SEA roles in recruiting and vetting external partners evolved throughout implementation of the revised SIG program. For example, some states that initially recruited and selected approved partners to work with their school turnarounds stopped providing that initial screening process for districts (e.g., Colorado; Corbett, 2011a). To maximize the potential for successful partnerships, states need to determine if they want to preapprove providers at the onset of the process to ensure a degree of quality control statewide.

States can increase the likelihood that the RFP process will lead to a comprehensive list of high-quality partners that can meet the needs of their schools and LEAs by:

- Engaging staff from multiple SEA departments in the creation and critique of both the RFP and the evaluation rubric to ensure they are clear, thoughtful, aligned to SEA goals and programs, and that they require the most relevant information from respondents, including providers' track records with similar projects;
- Setting a reasonable deadline and a response period of at least four weeks to allow for thoughtful submissions;
- Training reviewers for the application review process and ensuring they understand the role of external partners in turnaround and how to read between the lines and evaluate a high-quality partner versus a well-written response; and,
- Conducting a thorough and anonymous review of proposals.

Steps states have taken, and currently take, to evaluate potential providers include: holding in-depth conversations with key leaders, observing the organization in action, and discussing results with past clients. Conversations with former clients, especially those who have received similar services, are particularly valuable to determine whether partnerships succeeded or if contracts ended because services were no longer needed or if other issues led to the termination of contracts. While many partners collect performance data, such referrals and background checks are especially useful due to the lack of scientifically valid data for providers implementing the federal turnaround models. It is also useful

to assess the quality of the provider's management team, as well as the proposed on-the-ground staff. The latter is a particular challenge as external partners maintain a limited "bench" of field staff.

A variety of resources that focus specifically on the development of RFPs and interview questions, as well as evaluating responses to RFPs, exist and are available to assist districts and states in this field. For instance, Mass Insight Education & Research Institute published documents that provide extensive detail on the creation of state-initiated RFPs and the evaluation of responses (Cunningham, 2011; Mass Insight, 2010). The state of Colorado published a guide that includes a variety of useful tools to evaluate, interview, and select external partners (Colorado Department of Education, 2011).

SEA Example: Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, the SEA created a network of prequalified and approved partners who demonstrated specialized expertise in specific areas of improvement and an understanding of Massachusetts' guiding principles, known as the Conditions for School Effectiveness. The SEA vetted the Priority Partners through a rigorous three-step review process (see text box on next page). Partners must also take part in an annual evaluation process to assess if they added value to the school's and district's improvement efforts. Massachusetts created a comparison document to further assist school and district staff in understanding the differences between Priority Partners who specialize in turnaround and more traditional Title I service providers. The SEA website also includes a search function, which allows users to select specific areas of expertise and see which providers are preapproved.

After Massachusetts completed the review process, the SEA approved four partners to assist with social and emotional health, eight partners for maximizing learning time, 10 partners for the effective use of data, and five partners for district systems of support. All approved Priority Partners are included in a "Summary List and Profiles" published by the SEA that included philosophical and historical information, as well as a general cost structure. Understanding that turnaround requires a different set of skills than traditional improvement efforts, the SEA also created a comparison chart to help explain the difference between Partners for Title I Support and Intervention and Priority Partners for Turnaround. In addition, the Priority Partners Network meets with SEA staff quarterly to share concerns, network, and receive updates from the state.

Monitoring and Holding LEAs Accountable

Once the work with external partners begins, some SEAs closely monitor the relationships and the progress of the partnerships. Monitoring is crucial to ensure the turnaround team (i.e., external partner, school, and district) implements a model with fidelity, works together, equally contributes to the

Massachusetts' Priority Partners Review Protocol

Step One: Review of Written Proposals

The Massachusetts SEA conducted a formal review of each proposal using a standard process and scoring rubric to assess the following qualification areas: defined theory of action; experience and willingness to collaborate for turnaround; ability to build capacity for sustained improvement; proven outcomes-based measurement plan; demonstrated record of effectiveness; and financial capacity. A subset of the review team read and scored each written proposal. The outcome of each review included:

- A written proposal score, based on the combined scores of the reviewers;
- A summary of strengths and weaknesses;
- A set of questions and/or areas for further clarification.

The full review team convened after reviewing and scoring all the proposals to develop a shared understanding of each proposal's combined score, strengths and weaknesses, and areas in need of further clarification. Based on this information, the review team determined which applicants' references they would contact for interviews.

Step Two: Reference Interviews

For all proposals that met initial screening requirements, the SEA proceeded to conduct a more thorough evaluation of the applicant's demonstrated record of effectiveness by contacting references. A Review Team member, using a standard protocol and reference interview rubric, conducted interviews with at least one school or district reference. The interviewer scored the results and shared detailed notes with at least one other member of the Review Team to score as well. The results of the review included:

- A Step Two evaluation score based on the combined scores of the team members; and
- A set of additional questions or areas in need of further clarification, if not already identified through the written review process.

Based on the combined results of the written evaluation and reference interviews, the SEA then invited applicants to participate in a management interview.

Step 3: Applicant Management Interview

Based on the results of the written proposals and reference interviews, the SEA invited management teams from the top-scoring organizations to participate in an interview with the Review Team. Based on the first two steps of the review process, the Review Team identified both standard and customized questions for all applicants. The interview process clarified key issues, solicited additional information, and provided the SEA the opportunity to evaluate if the applicant had a strong plan to enter the district.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Appendix 2: Review Protocol. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/framework/level4/PriorityPartners.pdf

partnership, meets goals, and builds local capacity. This monitoring can be done in a variety of ways, including:

- Tracking and reporting key indicators of progress;
- Analyzing data;
- Conducting partner network meetings; and,
- Planning for sustainability.

Most states require regular reporting from the schools and districts but not from the external partners themselves. SEAs could also require districts to build in a monitoring structure at the local level to better ensure accountability. When creating regular reports at either the district or state level, it may be useful to include specific questions that evaluate the relationships with external partners. Such questions could include:

- Please describe the relationship with each of your external partners supporting turnaround.
- How often do school leaders communicate with partner staff?
- How often do district leaders communicate with partner staff?
- Reflect on the progress towards the projected benchmark goals, including leading and lagging indicators that monitor climate and academic performance.

- How are you and the partner building a plan for sustainability (i.e., what steps are you and the partner taking to ensure growth is sustained once the current contract ends)?
- What are the major areas of concern about your external partner(s)?
- Are there areas of support the state could provide to facilitate the relationship(s) with your external partner(s)?

SEAs are also able to monitor implementation and plan for sustainability by analyzing budgets. If a district uses significant federal resources to fund numerous full-time—internally or partner-based—staff positions, it is unlikely the district is building sufficient capacity or planning an adequate phase-out process to sustain turnaround efforts. For example, if a school received a federal school improvement grant, funds are renewable for up to three years. In theory, contracts with external partners, especially an LTP, should decrease in total cost and intensity over the course of the three-year period. If a partner provides the same level of services in year three as it did in year one, the state could question if local capacity was built and if the partner met specified goals, in particular, the goal of sustainability.

In addition to planning for sustainability, LEAs and states should maintain focus on their lowest-achieving schools even after the relationships with the partner(s) ends. Without continued attention, schools shift from receiving significant external supports (e.g., staff, expertise, funding) to the receipt of no additional supports, and progress may backtrack. While the external partners may decrease their services, a small role may be continued, and the conditions for success should remain in place until the school is fully sustainable (e.g. staffing flexibility, consistent and stable leadership, extended time). In effect, altered practices become embedded throughout the system to the point that a change in school or LEA leadership or the removal of external partners does not derail the improvement or reverse growth (Corbett, 2011a).

Arguably, the most difficult challenge in monitoring relationships and building sustainable systems is creating a way to determine what to do when partnerships do not produce expected results. Frequent questions include, "When do we pull the plug?" and "Whose fault is it anyway?" These issues align with the SEA's monitoring strategies, but most SEAs and LEAs also struggle with determining who is ultimately accountable for failures. Is the vendor providing less than adequate services? Is the school not implementing strategies completely or appropriately? Or, is the LEA preventing implementation or limiting school-based autonomies? If an LEA terminates a provider on the SEA's approved list, how should the SEA respond? Are the partners removed from the state's list automatically, or does the state complete additional analysis to ensure the provider has the right skills and resources to do the work to assess if they could succeed in another school or LEA?

SEAs can streamline the process of resolving performance issues if the SEA and schools carefully establish clear expectations and accountability provisions during the development of the RFP and subsequent contract and if there is ongoing communication between all entities. Ultimately, in the majority of SEAs, the responsibility falls most heavily on the LEAs, as they contract directly with the providers. An SEA can provide additional support by working directly with superintendents, encouraging LEA involvement and improvements, and serving as a mediator in negotiations between LEAs and providers. The more an SEA knows about a partnership during implementation, the more likely SEA staff can assist both the partner and the district in resolving problems as they arise.

Supporting Implementation

State agencies historically focused on monitoring and compliance, but the revised SIG program encourages SEAs to be more involved in the actual implementation and turnaround process (Corbett, 2011a; Rhim, 2011). In effect, SEAs support implementation in a variety of ways, from creating a "how to" guide to actively building relationships of and capacity in the turnaround teams.

SEA Example: Colorado

Colorado is one of the states that released an RFP for turnaround partners at one point, but ceased providing that service to districts in subsequent years. While the state no longer creates an approved provider list, leaders recognized the need for additional guidance to districts on how to recruit, select, and work with external partners. The resulting Resource Guide covers working with external partners, completing a needs assessment, releasing an RFP, evaluating responses, selecting a partner, performance contracting, best practices for implementation, and monitoring and evaluating performance. The descriptive and explanatory information is then supported by a variety of appendices that include additional resources and tools districts can use, including an RFP template, sample interview questions, and model contract language. While Colorado stepped back from providing a screened set of providers for districts, the SEA realized that districts and schools needed additional SEA supports to move forward on their own.

SEA Example: Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia developed a turnaround model that builds strong relationships with LTPs. Virginia first released an RFP and created a list of approved providers for all schools receiving SIG funds. All SIG recipients implementing the turnaround or transformation improvement models are required to select an LTP to assist in the development and the implementation of the model. After taking this first step, leaders at the Office of School Improvement (OSI) recognized that LEAs, school principals, and the external partners needed additional supports to build positive working relationships and to understand the

requirements of the federal improvement models—as implementing turnaround was a new role for most of the external partners as well. Many of the external partners also confirmed that Virginia provides some of the strongest supports to SIG teams of any of the states they work in as LTPs (Corbett, 2011b). The major components of Virginia's system of support includes:

- Technical Assistance Sessions—Each SIG team (i.e., external LTP staff, school principal, and district representative) attends a series of TA sessions together throughout the course of the three-year grant.
- State Facilitators—SEA assigns each SIG team a State Facilitator to oversee the ongoing work and to act as a liaison between the school, district, external partner, and SEA (Corbett, 2011b).

In addition, the OSI works diligently to develop open communication with the districts, principals, and the external partners. OSI oversaw contract/MOU negotiations between districts and the LTPs, assisted districts if legal or personality conflicts with the LTPs occurred, and assisted the LTPs when district and/or school leadership undermined the turnaround efforts. To date, LTPs utilized this close relationship and contacted OSI when they encountered significant political issues with a district. In another case, SEA staff directly contacted a partner's regional director to discuss statewide staffing concerns. OSI staff clarified to all entities that their role is to assist implementation, and they will work to remove whatever barriers—conditions or personalities—that stand in the way of improvement for students.

Building the External Provider Market

Several Education Management Organizations (EMOs) and charter school operators have utilized private social venture funds to incubate or scale up turnaround-type partners in specific regions, but SEAs mostly remained on the sidelines of marketplace development. Tennessee's Achievement School District is piloting a program that combines venture capital with district needs, with support from the Investing in Innovation (I3) fund and New Schools for New Orleans, to build the marketplace of turnaround-capable charter operators at the district level (Tennessee, 2011). Recently, several states have taken a more active role in building the external partner marketplace. While using different strategies, Massachusetts and Virginia are building the external partner marketplace to support their turnaround efforts, and their efforts are profiled below.

SEA Example: Massachusetts' Investment Fund

Ensuring an adequate supply of partners exists for the entire state and that those providers meet the specific needs of the LEAs and schools is a constant challenge. To expand the pool of both services and providers, Massachusetts allocated a portion of its Race to the Top dollars to increase the capacity of providers and to bring needed services to scale across the Commonwealth. Providers could apply for up to $500,000 each in the following areas of need:

- Expansion of geographic focus;
- Specialized or expansion of services;
  - Targeted middle and high school interventions,
  - English language learner solutions,
  - Special needs services,
  - District-level support and coordination,
  - Support for districts/schools in providing effective tiered instruction,
  - Grade level expansion; or
- Collaboration between partners to better serve schools and districts.

As stated previously, Massachusetts first approved 23 Priority Partners in four service areas that align to the Massachusetts Conditions for School Effectiveness: 1) addressing students' social, emotional, and health needs; 2) maximizing learning time; 3) effective use of data; and 4) district systems of support (e.g., human resources, leadership, financial management). As the comfort level with the initial Priority Partners increased, an RFQ was released to apply for the Priority Partners Investment Fund (PPIF).

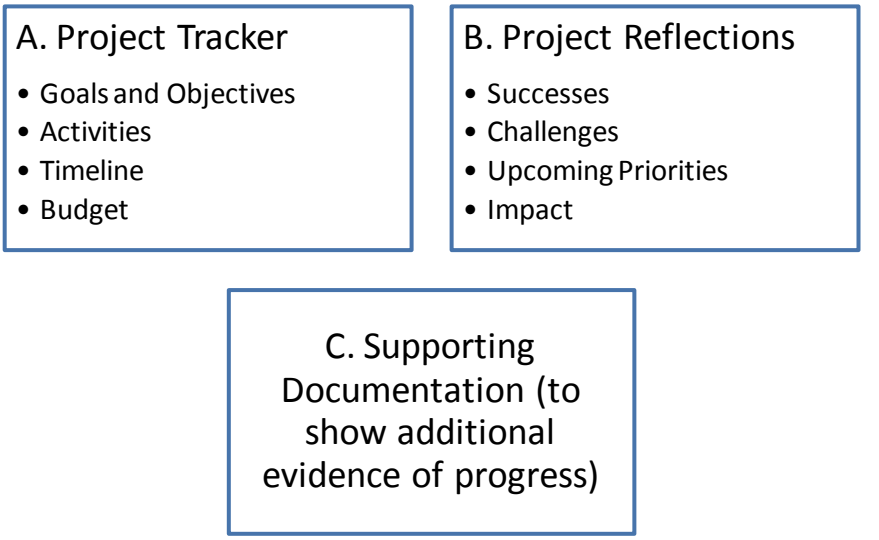
The selection process for the investment fund was less about proving a provider's data, as that was a primary consideration during the initial acceptance to the Priority Partners Network, but instead asked the partners to "sell" an idea. The review team first evaluated the written proposals and then called the specified partner districts to gauge the level of commitment to the initiative. The state used these calls to address: Was the district involved in the proposal creation? Did the district do more than write a letter of support? Is the district prepared to make systemic and sustainable changes? Is the initiative aligned to what the district is already doing? A total of 19 providers submitted proposals, and the review committee, which included experts who had previous experience with venture investment funds, approved seven awards totaling $2.5 million (SEA staff, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Once the SEA approved the providers, it separated the proposed activities into a series of subsequent work orders. Dividing the funds over the course of each year allowed the state to increase its monitoring capabilities, and staff were able to proactively catch any issues or concerns as they arose. Each work order covered a span of time (usually three to six months), was customized to each provider, reflected the provider's proposal, highlighted the major proposed activities, expected deliverables, and noted whether the provider was responsible for providing the SEA with any information or tools (SEA staff, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Early analysis of the investment fund shows promising results. While year one focused on planning for the majority of projects, an SEA staff member reflected, "It's sometimes difficult to not get impatient, but we knew we were funding thoughtful planning. Other [partners] are doing really intensive work, and they are showing results that are more tangible. But, it's challenging work,

Quarterly Reports

In addition to regular contact with the SEA and the district, providers also submit a quarterly report to the state. Quarterly follow-up calls and/or meetings also occur to ensure all parties are on the same page and to triangulate information. Required report components include:



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012c). MA Priority Partner Investment Fund: 2nd Quarterly Progress Report.

and we asked them to target high-needs areas, meaning it's more difficult to get the right conditions for success in place" (SEA staff, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Several suggested practices and early lessons learned from the Priority Partners Investment Fund include:

- Craft the RFQ/RFP broadly enough so that the providers come up with ideas that the SEA hasn't thought of, or wouldn't normally think of itself;
- Include external expertise on investing in new ventures;
- Prescreen applicants to eliminate applications and providers who do not understand the state context or who have not demonstrated success in the past;
- Truly evaluate a district's level of commitment before awarding funds;
- Chunk out work orders to track and monitor progress;
- Build sustainability into the application—that is, a focus on building capacity and district commitment; and,
- Develop a way to share what has been learned with both the SEA and the broader partner network.

State Example: Virginia's Lead Turnaround Partner Partnership

Virginia also recognized the limitations of the current partner marketplace and worked with the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL) to develop a new LTP. VFEL acts as the LTP but subcontracts with other external partners to supply the various services to the schools. Some of the subcontractors utilized in this partnership already serve as LTPs in Virginia schools and therefore understand Virginia's SIG program. The various initial partners and the skills or programs they contributed included:

- Cambridge Education—School Quality Reviews, principal and teacher observation training, and the Tripod survey;
- College of William & Mary—Principal and teacher observation training;
- EdisonLearning—Content coach training and supervision, professional development, and data analysis;
- National Institute for School Leaders (NISL)—Intensive training for coaches and key district staff; and
- Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)—Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.

While VFEL acts as the lead partner, each of the other supporting partners works with VFEL to develop a comprehensive set of services. While the partnership is still in its infancy and it is too early to evaluate the relationship or the results, it is a promising model to follow.

State Example: Illinois' State System of Support

Illinois is in the process of launching a new organizational structure for its statewide system of support (SSOS). As opposed to running all supports, technical assistance, and monitoring of school improvement including turnaround through the SEA, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) released an RFP to external partners to manage and coordinate the state's Center for School Improvement (Center). The Center is fully integrated within the SEA, but managed by an external partner. The Center Director is charged with overseeing a variety of divisions including: Curriculum and Support, Regional Supports (which include Content Directors and District Assistance Teams), Priority School Interventions (which includes Rapid Response Teams), and District Accountability and Oversight. The latter position also reports to the SEA's Deputy Superintendent.

The primary functions of the Center include:

- Provide oversight and management to the SSOS with a focus on bringing coherence and coordination to the regional delivery systems and SSOS partners in the state;
- Work with the ISBE Roundtable to maintain alignment with the agency's vision and reform initiatives;

- Deploy staff to work with identified districts on the development and implementation of customized continuous improvement plans;
- Design and support the use of a connected set of tools and resources to increase district-level capacity to improve teaching and learning; and
- Develop a robust system-wide evaluation process for the SSOS to promote its continuous improvement to better serve districts and schools (Illinois, 2012).

While communication between the Center and SEA leadership is crucial to the success of the Center, the SEA describes its role as the fiscal agent responsible for the contract with the winning bidder. ISBE will conduct all necessary fiduciary and fiscal audits and monitoring of work done under the contract. In addition, ISBE will have regular communication and ongoing collaboration with the Center Director and all other necessary personnel through the Roundtable (a cross-divisional advisory committee comprised of ISBE senior staff members that will set agency direction and provide leadership to the Center's governance; Illinois, 2012). While external partners provided significant turnaround supports to SEAs in the past, this is the first time an external partner is managing and coordinating an SSOS in collaboration with the SEA.

Emerging Lessons from the Field

Successful turnaround efforts must be sustained and supported with corresponding changes at all levels. Turnaround efforts will not be successful if they are only school-focused and not supported by district changes (Corbett, 2011; Kowal, 2011). External partners may help establish those systems and processes, but it is likely that their level of involvement may be restricted due to funding limitations and because the supports of external partners will decrease as the school, LEA, and SEA build their own capacity. External partners are often more nimble than SEAs and are able to make rapid organizational changes to respond to policy changes and the needs in the field. As a result of this flexibility, external partners will continue to be utilized in the ever-changing and ever-growing niche of school turnaround. SEAs and LEAs must work together and in collaboration with external partners to determine how to ensure the work moves forward as planned and that the sought after long-term gains in student achievement are achieved and sustained.

Over the past several years, SEAs have increasingly recruited, approved, and contracted with external partners for turnaround, but there is substantial room for growth. Areas for further improvement include tracking results of various providers, developing networks of external partners to share best and promising practices within and across states, and developing more capacity of turnaround providers themselves. As states develop plans for the use of external partners, leaders should consider the following action principles.

Action Principles

Acknowledge that supporting schools, districts, and external partners with contracting and implementation is a new role for SEAs

- Determine the level of involvement the SEA desires and has expertise to provide.
- Determine the extent the SEA should support development of external partner capacity.
- Develop strategies and practices to support a strong and positive working environment with shared accountability and structures.
- Align expectations and supports among all the SEA divisions or programs involved (e.g., Race to the Top, SIG, turnaround/innovation, school improvement, Title I, regional offices).
- Engage outside supports, organizations, national associations, or state-level partners to build SEA capacity.
- Determine which supports the SEA should phase out, maintain, or shift to a different division.
- Monitor engagements with external partners with fidelity, frequency, and consistency.

Develop quality control mechanisms throughout the system of support

- SEAs must be involved in some degree of quality control—either with a preapproval process, ongoing monitoring, and/or evaluating efforts prior to grant renewal.
- As a condition of SIG funding, require districts/schools to complete an MOU or scope of work with each external partner that clearly defines: proposed activities, responsibilities, expectations, benchmarks, goals, and consequences or termination for lack of performance.
- If the SEA has an approved provider list, it is important to update that list based on performance. In order to remove a partner due to a lack of performance, the SEA must monitor external providers' performance.
- Develop processes to accurately assess whom to attribute failing or unsuccessful strategies or partnerships (i.e., to ensure a partner is only removed from the list for their own performance and is not being used as a scapegoat for school or district problems).
- Be proactive and don't wait until problems arise—SEAs with ongoing internal communication as well as communication with external partners and districts are better able to address problems in a timely manner and proactively address concerns.
- Work with external partners to build their capacity to enhance services to existing schools or to scale up to additional schools.

Resources

Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2005). *School restructuring options under No Child Left Behind: What works when? Contracting with education management organizations.* Washington, DC: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org/pubs/restructuring/KnowledgeIssues3Contracting.pdf

Colorado Department of Education. (2011). *Engaging external providers resource guide*. Retrieved from http://corbetteducation.com/CDEresourceguide.pdf

Corbett, J. (2011a). *Lead turnaround partners: How the emerging marketplace of lead turnaround partners is changing school improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/LeadPartners.pdf

Corbett, J. (2011b). *The Virginia story: Forging strong working relationships among the state, district, school, and external lead partners for the implementation of school improvement grants*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/Promising_practice_Virginia.pdf

Cunningham, J. (2011). *Forging partnerships for turnaround: Emerging lessons from state RFP processes.* Boston, MA: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/127/file/1/pubs/2011/02/07/STG_Lessons_from_State_RFP_Processes_Feb_2010.pdf

Hill, P., James, L., & Guthrie, J. (1997). *Reinventing public education: How contracting can transform America's schools*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Illinois Center for School Improvement. (2012). *Frequently asked questions for the Center for School Improvement*. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.net/grants/center/pdf/faqs.pdf

Kim, J. (2012). *Lead partner playbook*. Boston, MA: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/stg-resources/161/file/1/pubs/2012/05/23/Mass_Insight_STG_Lead_Partner_Playbook_1.pdf

Kowal, J., & Ableidinger, J. (2011). *School turnarounds in Colorado: Untangling a web of supports for struggling schools.* Retrieved from http://www.dkfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/SchoolTurnaroundsInColorado-Jan2011.pdf

Learning Point Associates. (2010). *Guide to working with external partners: Partnerships to improve teaching and learning*. Retrieved from www.learningpt.org/pdfs/External_Provider_Guide.pdf

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. (2010, February). *Using RFPs to select lead partners.* Boston, MA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/stg-resources/90/

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. (2010). *The lead partner: A new partnership model*. Boston, MA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/stgresources/108/file/1/pubs/2010/07/09/STG_Lead_Partner_master_deck_March_2010.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012a). *Massachusetts Priority Partner comparison chart*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/partnership/comparison.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012b). *MA Priority Partners for turnaround: Summary list and profiles*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/framework/level4/PriorityPartners.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012c). *MA Priority Partner Investment Fund: 2nd quarterly progress report*.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012d). *Massachusetts Priority Partner Investment Fund: Highlights document*.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012e). *MA Priority Partners Investment Fund RFQ*. Retrieved from http://corbetteducation.com/MApriority partnersinvestmentRFQ.pdf

Rhim, L. (2005). *School restructuring in Philadelphia: Lessons from 2002 to 2005*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Rhim, L., & Redding, S. (2011). *Fulcrum of change: Leveraging 50 states to turn around 5,000 schools*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/Fulcrum_of_Change.pdf

Tennessee Government. (2011). *ASD launches charter school application and start-up funding program*. Retrieved from http://news.tn.gov/node/7556

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Guidance on School Improvement Grants under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Washington, DC: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/programs/sif/.

Turnaround Communities of Practice: Addressing the Urgency

Kelly Stuart, Julie Duffield, and Sylvie Hale
with contributions by Anu Advani and Libby Rognier

Communities of Practice (CoPs) can be an important component of a state's turnaround-focused technical assistance efforts through peer-to-peer, face-to-face, and online collaborative activities within states, districts, and schools. CoPs play a vital role in responding to pressing, constantly evolving needs while building capacity and accelerating knowledge critical to the turnaround effort. Using CoPs provides states with a technical assistance approach to seek out solutions to the complex issues of school turnaround and gain support from stakeholders in implementing those solutions. When well implemented across state and within state, CoPs are positioned to serve as an important means to spread knowledge and expertise, build networks, develop collaborative solutions, and, ultimately, transform practice.

This chapter highlights the use of CoPs by states to collaborate with multiple stakeholders to strengthen technical assistance, curate best practices, and support the implementation of these practices within local district and school contexts. Below we review the salient literature on CoPs, describe a conceptual framework for SEAs to establish and support CoPs, provide examples, and offer key principles for action. Coupled, and perhaps integrated, with existing states' systems of support, CoPs have the potential to transform how states support their turnaround LEAs by increasing the SEAs' capacity to deliver technical assistance, disseminate key resources, develop networks, and foster collaborative relationships.

Review of Literature: What Do We Know?

The literature on communities and their utility in changing practice dates back several decades; however, steady evolution and growth in communication

technologies is rapidly changing the landscape of how CoPs can influence and sustain change. Below, we describe not only the concepts of CoPs, on- and off-line, but also the role technology can play in supporting how an SEA designs and delivers its technical assistance collaboratively for community members.

Research on CoPs has provided a conceptual understanding of how communities form and succeed. The concept of CoPs has its roots in the educational theory of situated learning. Early research (Lave & Wenger, 1991) referred to situated learning as communities where learning and practice work together in a social environment and rely on a collaborative novice/expert relationship. Later research (Wenger, 1998, 2002, 2011) examined the focus on relationships between individuals and the participation of people engaged in creating and sharing knowledge, as well as transforming practice.

The literature on CoPs and situated learning (Wenger, 1998) assert that people learn best in communities rather than as isolated individuals. Specifically, a community of practice is a group of people "who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and want to deepen their knowledge and expertise in an area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Further, Wenger's research (2002, 2009) describes three characteristics crucial to any effective CoP:

1. **The domain**: Members are brought together by a learning need they share. In the context of turnaround, the domain is to explore what works in turning around low-achieving schools and building capacity to implement change.
2. **The community**: The collective learning of the members becomes a bond among them over time with shared needs and goals.
3. **The practice**: The community interactions produce new knowledge and resources as well as offer problem solving and support for implementation.

An SEA-led community of practice may be created to solve problems, build collective learning, and, ultimately, share the effective practices to encourage wider adoption. The *domain* can be as broad as school turnaround or as specific as teacher and leadership pipelines. The *community* could include a specific workgroup (affinity group such as English learners), which has a shared identity and passion for its work and is bonded through the mutual need to learn. The *practice* focuses on intentional sharing and reviewing for understanding—examining which turnaround practices are working and for what reasons.

Most recently, Wenger et al. (2009) describe how technology has changed what it means for communities to "be together," now that digital tools are part of most communities' "habitats." Habitats are not just a configuration of technologies, but also a dynamic, mutually defining relationship dependent on the culture of the community. Communities that exist online give educators access to human

and informational resources not available locally and provide the opportunity for new knowledge creation (Booth, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Wang, Yang, & Chou, 2008). *Connect and Inspire* (Connected Educators, 2011)[1] calls for educators to be more than information experts; they must be collaborators in learning, seeking new knowledge and constantly acquiring new skills.

Online communities are at their heart "social learning spaces" (Booth, 2011; Schlager et al., 2009). However, as Booth highlights, the challenge for most online communities is recognizing that simply building a platform and inviting educators will not translate into productive communities. Virtual communities don't just happen. Ameliorating the challenge of a "post and hope" community can be addressed by attending to consistent dimensions present in successful online communities. These include:

- *Collective identity and clear purpose* provide a common bond.
- *Leadership and effective moderation* build trust, make participants feel comfortable, and develop joint ownership.
- *Opportunities for sharing knowledge, expertise, and experiences* contribute to building capacity and knowledge as well as problem solving.
- *Governance structure and guidelines for participation* create norms and common agreements that guide participant interactions.
- *Community sociability and usability* help provide a sense of community through frequent and personalized communication.
- *Measuring success* establishes accountability and a feedback process to support further growth and learning.

Conceptual Framework for State-Initiated CoPs: A Blended Approach

With increased accountability, coupled with significant flexibility, now more than ever states play a crucial role in disseminating emerging and best practices on school turnaround. States have implemented major reforms to develop scalable solutions to human capital and operator capacity issues, creating conditions for success through policy change, assessing the quality of turnaround providers and operators, and investing in the information technology and accountability infrastructure that supports turnaround success (Kutash et al., 2010).

SEAs have numerous opportunities to leverage both in-person and virtual communication to maximize reach and impact through CoPs. There is no substitute for face-to-face meetings, but online connections can play a critical role before, during, and after in-person CoP convenings to delve deeper into topical areas, build collaborative relationships, and continue group learning. When CoPs emerge from or leverage face-to face-interactions, they are likely to grow (Nichani & Hung, 2002).

[1]The Connected Educators website (http://connectededucators.org/) and associated publications offer resources, reports, and briefs that detail step-by-step support in understanding key components of effective CoPs, considerations for technology, how to lead a community, and how to measure the success of a community.

Research is evolving on this blended approach of in-person and virtual interaction for CoPs. Currently, Connected Educators is conducting ongoing design research on the intersection of online and face-to-face professional engagements across multiple contexts. The focus is on examining different levels of interaction or how to measure connectedness. Results of this research will inform future editions of *Connect and Inspire* reporting.

The table below illustrates a framework that identifies the major characteristics of CoPs, with questions for consideration to guide an SEA in establishing and supporting CoPs. This framework incorporates what is known about effective CoPs, both off- and online, and assumes the use of technology as applicable in responding to many of the *considerations* listed below.

Framework for Building and Maintaining SEA-Led Communities of Practice

Characteristic	Considerations
Domain: the shared definition of the learning need that brings members together	• What is the shared interest of the community? What is the purpose for the group? • What do members hope to gain from sharing and social interactions?
Community: the relationship that bonds the group around the collective learning, built over time through its members' regular interaction	• What level of interaction will facilitate community building? • Does the group have sufficient levels of trust and willingness to share to facilitate collective learning? How can the community ensure that all members feel a sense of belonging?
Practice: the various community interactions to build a body of knowledge, including shared and produced learning activities, resources, and tools	• What interactions will best engage and meet the needs of the community? (e.g., workgroups, discussions, shared presentations, content development, and/or curation) • How can these learning activities lead to problem solving and change in practice? • What new body of knowledge results from the CoP for others interested in the same domain?

Characteristic	Considerations
Venue: the setting(s) of the community's interactions	• When, where, and how will community members interact? (e.g., in-person, virtual, synchronous, asynchronous, or a blended approach) • Which venues are most successful for this community, in terms of participation and productivity? • What types of interactions and exploration are best suited to various face-to-face and online environments?
Success Factors: the components that support successful communities	• How will the following be defined, addressed, and maintained in the community? ▪ Identity and purpose ▪ Leadership and moderation ▪ Knowledge sharing and expertise ▪ Governance and protocols ▪ Roles and responsibilities ▪ Communication ▪ Accountability and feedback

As the sponsor of a community, the SEA provides or guides CoP leadership through a facilitation and moderation role. In addition, the SEA guides the curation and dissemination of critical content as well as offers consultations and technical assistance. The learning activities and venues might include exchanges via webinars and online convenings, in-person events, consultations, discussions, and social curation of content. The challenge is to go beyond the exchange of resources to engagement in deeper problem-solving and reflective conversations.

It is important to build joint ownership by defining specific roles within the community and opportunities to participate through explicit protocols and processes. It is through social learning that a community comes together, and this is the main differentiator between CoPs and task forces or teams. Recognizing that the SEA must be in partnership with LEAs in fostering the community, defined roles assist in keeping the community focused. Clear roles and responsibilities increase the possibility that the community can maintain and sustain changes in leadership as the responsibility is shared among key members. The Wenger-Tayners[2] suggest different *roles* within the community to enable distributed leadership and ensure joint ownership. For example, *"agenda activists"* in a school turnaround administrators' CoP would take the lead in maintaining the community's learning agenda based on issues, challenges, and opportunities

[2]Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner (http://wenger-trayner.com) are known for their seminal work on communities of practice and social learning theory, learning across boundaries, and the use of social media.

facing turnaround leaders. Other members might elect to be *"community keepers/connectors"* and take the lead in ensuring all voices are heard at the table and monitoring group interaction dynamics.

Potential for Communities of Practice

CoPs offer tremendous potential to transform low-performing schools. Through CoPs, an SEA can disseminate best practices and support capacity building. Bringing stakeholders together through their common need to share, implement, and evaluate practices holds great promise for transforming the lives of millions of students throughout the country. Wenger and his colleagues said it best:

> A salient benefit of communities, in fact, is to bridge formal organizational boundaries in order to increase the collective knowledge, skills, and professional trust and reciprocity of practitioners who serve in these organizations. Because they are inherently boundary-crossing entities, communities of practice are a particularly appropriate structural model for cross-agency and cross-sector collaborations. (Synder, Wenger, & Briggs, 2003, p. 3)

Examples of State-Created Communities of Practice

SEAs are sponsoring different types of communities in order to support turnaround stakeholder needs to build connections between people, resources, and practice. Profiled below are three examples of communities which SEAs have created within their states to support school turnaround efforts:

- **Nevada SIG Group** highlights a combination of face-to-face and online communication to leverage expertise among the community of SEA and districts and to facilitate districts' sharing of resources and practices.
- **Washington Leadership Network** provides an example of cultivating professional connections in an established online environment where state leadership shares responsibilities with districts to leverage resources and partner around practices.
- **Michigan DOE Partnership** focuses on convening CoPs to improve high school learning and engagement. These CoPs were developed over several years based on partnership model principles of leading by convening, coalescing around issues, ensuring relevant participation, and doing work together.

Nevada SIG Group

Nevada has two cohorts of SIG schools. Best practices and lessons learned from cohort one were used to inform and enhance the cohort two applications. The SEA connected SIG leaders in districts across the state to share successful practices for working with teachers' unions, community outreach, and involving parents in the SIG proposal process. Nevada Department of Education (NDE) conducts regular in-person SIG conferences to bring districts with SIG-identified

schools together. Topics addressed during the meetings have included building high performing collaborative cultures, effective teaching, coaching partnerships and processes, family and parent engagement, STEM initiatives, and effective learning. State and national experts presented in their fields to attendees, including school and district leadership and classroom teachers. Through these meetings, NDE is brokering important peer-to-peer connections for the SIG implementers, as well as providing resources and training around common topics of interest.

During the 2011–12 school year, the NDE SIG director launched a Nevada-specific community space on the School Turnaround Learning Community web site (STLC) for the SIG schools to have ongoing access to updated school turnaround resources and to complement connections between face-to-face convenings. The STLC website offers resources, online training, and discussion tools enabling users to share school turnaround practices and lessons learned and facilitates networking to support schools more effectively. The STLC online platform allows for state-specific groups or workspaces for CoPs to curate their own resource collections as well as share their experiences.

This venue of a private community was employed to share Nevada-specific information on turnaround, important calendar dates, and host webinars specific to Nevada's turnaround needs. Webinar topics included the use of data and preparing for the Common Core State Standards in literacy. Nevada's group within the School Turnaround Learning Community provides a forum for ongoing communication among the Nevada SIG practitioners within a national site that highlights vetted resources and spotlights practices via large webinars to support two-way communication between the SEA and LEAs.

Washington Leadership Network

In December 2012, the Office of School and Student Success at the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction launched a community in Edmodo[3] for educators in Washington State to network, share ideas, collaborate, and explore best practices for improving student and school achievement. Led by two staff members reporting directly to the chief state school officer, this network is a resource for educators throughout the state to connect with other peers who are also focusing on the domain of improving student achievement. The purpose of this community is to gain insight into the challenges faced by schools working to meet goals and benchmarks and to share successful models and strategies that have worked, as well as to network and collaborate with educators from across the nation.

[3]Edmodo (https://www.edmodo.com/) is an educational social media platform for teachers, students, and parents. Uses include posting assignments and quizzes, creating polls for student responses, embedding video clips, creating learning groups, and creating a calendar of events and assignments. Students can also turn in assignments or upload assignments for their teachers to view, grade, and provide instant feedback. Edmodo houses many CoPs for teachers and students.

The Office of Student and School Success employed the following dissemination strategies to help educators learn about the network:

- Sent emails to school and district administrators and staff throughout the state inviting them to join the network.
- Leveraged Edmodo as the online platform with the Leadership Network as a component of the outreach presentation conducted at each of the nine Educational Service Districts throughout the state for identified schools and districts.
- Conducted conversations about the intent and vision of the network with Technical Assistance Contractors and School Coaches assigned to the Priority and Focus schools.

The network CoP facilitators quickly learned the importance of using focused conversations for affinity-based groups to address an issue-specific domain topic, as well as the need to support joint facilitation in enrolling other community members in the CoP. For example, one of the community members, the Director of Multilingual Programs of a district in western Washington, volunteered to conduct a focus group on English learners that offered educators throughout the state access to expertise and conversations about their individual needs. These kinds of focused conversations, generated from community members, are an essential ingredient in developing a network that focuses on members' needs and leverages social learning.

The Office of Student and School Success is continuing to implement its vision for using Edmodo to support CoPs through shared activities such as curating school turnaround resources. Building on their success, they plan to eventually launch an Emerging Schools group with the Office's Online Emerging School Coach to facilitate a conversation to support schools with this designation. The K–12 Director of Learning and Leadership plans to use Edmodo as a tool to help facilitate monthly meetings conducted with the Office's School Coaches and Technical Assistance Contractors. The use of Edmodo as a means to stay informed and connected will be a component of a statewide Teacher Leadership Symposium that the Office will facilitate during the summer. The Office will continue to seek partners and build joint leadership roles to support additional issue-specific groups for educators in Washington to share ideas, collaborate, and explore best practices for improving student and school achievement. Washington's Leadership Network demonstrates an example of an SEA building its state-specific network inside an existing larger educational online community space as a way to share resources, make connections between members, and a way for members to take on leadership roles to share their own challenges and promising practices.

Michigan DOE CoPs Partnership

In 2005, the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE-EIS) collaborated with the IDEA

Partnership[4] to support state leadership in Michigan. The state leaders formed a CoP, engaging a range of stakeholders to build capacity for secondary school redesign and prepare for the adoption of the new high school graduation requirements.

A pilot project, Reach and Teach for Learning, was designed to support middle and high school teams as they explored what it would take to assist their struggling learners, including their students with disabilities, to make progress in the general curriculum. The design team leaders of this CoP work group included state leaders and associations (Michigan Education Association—MEA, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals—MASSP). The pilot was so successful that the sponsors wanted to continue deepening their learning and reaching out to the field to strengthen secondary school improvement.

Leisa Gallagher, Director of the Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners (RTSL) initiative in MDE's Center for Educational Networking, attests that because state leadership learned how to relate according to what is now identified as the "Partnership Way"—leading by convening, coalescing around issues, ensuring relevant participation, and doing work together—these methods showed significant data improvements and smoothed the path for the creation of two major efforts in the MDE: the Superintendent's Dropout Challenge and a new mandated dropout prevention initiative funded by OSE-EIS for RTSL.

The Superintendent's Dropout Challenge currently reaches 1,800 elementary, middle, and high schools and was formally integrated into Michigan's 2012 ESEA Flexibility Waiver system, requiring Focus and Priority schools to participate in the Challenge. It was launched with the support of the original CoP partners who worked together from 2005–2008. It is a testament to the longevity of the community that, eight years later, the current Challenge CoP workgroup is staffed by several of the same colleagues who participated in the original IDEA Partnership learning community. The community workgroup includes former department members who participate on a voluntary basis; strong relationships and joint leadership have helped ensure the community's sustainability despite changes in formal MDE roles. This authentic engagement is a sign of a strong collective identity, effective leadership and moderation, and well-understood norms for community participation.

RTSL continues to partner with MASSP and has worked with two cohorts of secondary schools since its launch. RTSL and its success in increasing student achievement was highlighted on the PBS NewsHour.

Educators who are part of this state CoP ask themselves deep questions: "How is our personal identity engaged in the work? How can we share our difficult experiences to transform our schools and communities?" By learning with

[4]With the Office of Special Education Programs in USDE, the IDEA partner organizations form a community with the potential and intention to transform the way they work to improve outcomes for all students, especially students with disabilities. (http://www.ideapartnership.org/)

others, Michigan's state-level educators have formed a sustainable CoP which has expanded to address new school improvement domains.

Action Principles

Below we provide specific action principles as recommendations to get started with a community of practice, based on best practices shared in literature and examples in practice.

Build joint leadership and membership for active participation within the state

- Identify leadership roles and responsibilities and provide training and support to ensure effective facilitation and interactivity. (See Connected Educators for examples).
- Develop governance structures and guidelines for various stakeholder groups to contribute.
- Cluster members around a common identity (domain), purpose, and need.
- Utilize protocols to ensure participation among members for regular ongoing communication to problem solve on similar turnaround challenges.
- Focus on the work and recognize the importance of building trust among members; this will help build reciprocity between members.
- Include both the chief state school officer and the local community in the development process to help ensure different stakeholder sponsorship.

Implement peer-to-peer learning activities to further curate and communicate best practices

- Use the expertise, including tools and resources, of existing communities and regional and national technical assistance organizations to codify and disseminate best practices (e.g., The Center on School Turnaround, the State Implementation and Scaling Up of Evidence-based Practice Center [SISEP] at UNC, Doing What Works).
- Leverage resources and allow time for members to apply best practices in their own local context. Encourage sharing and analysis of successes and failures.
- Identify specific activities appropriate for the community by blending both synchronous and asynchronous collaboration to foster sharing of knowledge, expertise, and experiences, such as scheduled webinars, impromptu communications, discussions, and content development.
- Recognize that communities have different needs and evolve in a variety of ways, ranging from informal to formal.
- Remember a community is not website; it is the convening, coalescing around issues, ensuring relevant participation, and doing work together.

Resources

State Implementation and Scaling Up of Evidence-Based Practice Center (http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu) offers several tools and an Active Implementation Hub to assist stakeholders involved in active implementation and scaling up of programs and innovations. The site's goal is to increase the knowledge and improve the performance of persons engaged in actively implementing any program or practice and offers several protocols for engaging stakeholders in conversation.

The **Connected Educators** (http://connectededucators.org/) website and associated publications offer resources, reports, and briefs that detail step-by-step support in understanding key components of effective CoPs, considerations for technology, how to lead a community, and how to measure the success of a community.

IDEA Partnership Model: The Partnership Way. With the Office of Special Education Programs, USDE, the IDEA partner organizations form a community with the potential and intention to transform the way they work to improve outcomes for all students, especially students with disabilities (http://www.ideapartnership.org/building-connections/the-partnership-way.html). This work includes an online community site (www.sharedwork.org) that focuses on approaches fostering two-way communication, offering accessibility to all stakeholders, presenting the work through a community lens, and serving as a vehicle for inviting participation.

The **Center on School Turnaround** (www.centeronschoolturnaround.org) is part of a federal network of 15 Regional Comprehensive Centers, serving individual states or clusters of states, and seven national Content Centers. Together, the 22 Comprehensive Centers are charged with building the capacity of state educational agencies (SEAs) to assist districts and schools in meeting student achievement goals. Staff of the Center have years of experience in designing, launching, and facilitating online interactions, including CoPs. The Center is developing a comprehensive toolkit on CoPs that will complement this chapter.

The **School Turnaround Learning Community** (www.schoolturnaround-support.org) offers a platform to set up a state-specific group or workspace. The online space includes a number of features such as discussions, resource sharing, and a newsletter. States can host state-specific webinars, disseminate effective practices, and offer two-way communication between the state and districts. States interested in utilizing the STLC for their own work can contact info@schoolturnaroundsupport.org to request an initial discussion with STLC staff about their state needs and aspirations for leading a CoP.

References

Booth, S. (2011). *Cultivating knowledge sharing and trust in online communities for educators: A multiple-case study* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

Burns, M., & Dimock, K. V. (2007). *Technology as a catalyst for school communities: Beyond boxes and bandwidth*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kutash, J., Nico, E., Gorin, E., Rahmatullah, S., & Tallant, K. (2010). *The school turnaround field guide*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Wallace Foundation.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Nichani, M., & Hung, D. (2002). Can a community of practice exist online? *Educational Technology, 42*(4), 49–54.

Synder, W., Wenger, E., & Briggs, X. (2003). *Communities of practice in government: Leveraging knowledge for performance.* Retrieved from http://www.ewenger.com/pub/pubCoPs_in_government_PM_wrd.doc

Treacy, B., Kleiman, G., & Peterson, K. (2002). Successful online professional development. *Learning & Leading with Technology, 29*(4), 6–9, 57–59.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Connect and inspire: Online communities of practice in education*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *Resources and tools for evaluation of online communities of practice*. Washington, DC: Author.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., & Snyder, W. (2000). Communities of practice: The organizational frontier. *Harvard Business Review, 78*(1), 139–145.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Wenger, E., White, N., & Smith, J. (2009). *Digital habitats: Stewarding technology for communities.* Portland, OR: CPsquare.

Wenger, E., Trayner, B., & de Laat, M. (2011). *Promoting and assessing value creation in communities and networks: A conceptual framework*. Rapport 18, Ruud de Moor Centrum, Open University of the Netherlands.

Fostering Success for English Learners in Turnaround Schools: What State Education Agencies Need to Know and Be Able to Do

Robert Linquanti

English learners (ELs) constitute one of the fastest growing K–12 public school student populations in the United States. Over the past 12 years, the EL population has grown by two-thirds to over 5 million students, and in several states, particularly in the southeast and midwest, it has grown by several hundred percent (NCELA, 2010). The broader category of language minority students (ages 5–17)—those from homes where a language other than or in addition to English is spoken—now totals nearly 12 million (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2011). This population is expected to grow to almost half the total U.S. K–12 public school population by the middle of this century.

ELs also constitute a sizable subpopulation of many low-performing and turnaround schools (Taylor et al., 2010). For reasons explained below, this is not surprising: ELs are most often *by definition* low-performing on academic assessments given in English, and current definitions of the EL cohort as well as the structure and rules of most states' test-based accountability systems effectively over represent ELs' underperformance (Ho, 2008; Hopkins et al., 2013; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013).

Beyond these definitional and reporting dilemmas, there is substantial evidence that the preparation and ongoing professional development of educators (teachers and administrators) regarding ELs is insufficient and that the capacity of current school systems to meet ELs' instructional needs is often weak (Gándara et al., 2003; Koelsch et al., 2010). This is particularly the case with schools under corrective action or restructuring: Two-thirds of educators in these schools nationally reported needing help addressing EL instructional

needs, and half indicated those needs were insufficiently met (Taylor et al., 2010). ELs' "opportunity gap" is further exacerbated by poverty, as they are almost twice as likely to be from low-income households as compared to their native English-speaking counterparts and to attend schools with higher concentrations of poverty, which also have fewer educational resources and qualified teachers (Gándara et al., 2008; MPI, 2011). The advent of next-generation standards and assessments—in academic content areas and English language proficiency (ELP)—offer both promise and peril for ELs (Linquanti, 2011) and heighten the urgency of addressing these issues, particularly in turnaround schools.

This chapter lays out a framework of fundamental considerations with respect to ELs in order to foster greater understanding of their strengths and needs; examines the opportunities and risks for improving EL instruction and learning in the current context of next-generation standards and assessments, as well as of ESEA flexibility and Race to the Top Program requirements; and provides examples of innovative SEA practices for supporting local district and school improvement. The chapter concludes by providing key principles for SEA action with respect to this population in turnaround schools.

Defining English Learners and the EL Subgroup: Fundamental Considerations

In federal law, ELs are defined as students from an environment where a language other than or in addition to English is spoken and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or comprehending English may be sufficient to deny them the ability to effectively perform in classrooms where English is the medium of instruction; to achieve on state academic content assessments, or to participate fully in society (ESEA, Sec. 9101 (25)). Often referred to monolithically, ELs are in reality very diverse and exhibit a wide range of language and academic competencies, both in English and their primary language. Importantly, most ELs are U.S.-born, and vary in their initial English proficiency on entry and time in the school system.

A Dynamic Subgroup

Unlike other designated student subgroups which are based on fairly stable student characteristics, EL subgroup status is by design *temporary*: ELs are *expected* to leave the category as a result of effective, specialized language instruction and academic support services they are legally entitled to receive. Moreover, EL status is operationalized typically using *both* linguistic *and* academic performance standards, so the most linguistically and academically accomplished students exit the EL category over time, while those not making sufficient progress remain and are joined by newly entering ELs, who are by definition at low ELP levels (National Research Council, 2011; Wolf et al., 2008;

Working Group on ELL Policy, 2011). Under federal accountability rules, states, districts, and schools are allowed to count former "exited" ELs in the EL subgroup for up to two years after they exit but not beyond. This inherent "revolving door" phenomenon systematically skews EL subgroup membership toward lower-performing students and under represents academic performance and growth as reported by subgroup statistics, thereby undermining meaningful accountability. In particular, educators are not credited—or held accountable—for the long-term outcomes of all initial EL students, particularly at the secondary level.

Language Proficiency, Academic Performance, and Time

An English learner's ELP level clearly affects her ability to learn academic content in English and to demonstrate academic knowledge and skills on assessment events carried out in English—two of the defining characteristics of an EL in federal law. While EL students at every ELP level can access and engage with rigorous, grade-level content if appropriately supported to do so, ELs at higher levels of English proficiency are better able and more likely to learn and demonstrate knowledge and skills using English (Cook, Linquanti, Chinen, & Jung, 2012; Walqui & Heritage, 2012). Most English learners will take *four to seven years* on average to develop the academic English capacities they need to fully handle grade-level content demands. The actual time required depends on such factors as initial English language proficiency, age/grade on entry to U.S. schools, and prior educational experiences (Cook et al., 2012; Cook & Zhao, 2011; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Thompson, 2012).

Moreover, language proficiency becomes increasingly complex as students move through school. The kind of proficiency required for academic work in Grade 2, for example, is very different from that required in Grade 9, as the language demands of academic subject matter increase substantially each grade level. Typically, students at lower grade levels and lower ELP levels progress faster than students at higher grade levels and higher ELP levels (Cook et al., 2008). This suggests that the characteristics and needs of ELs will change between lower and upper grades. In particular, it is important to distinguish ELs that are relative newcomers (first one or two years in the system) from current ELs that are "normatively" progressing and from longer-term ELs whose progress has stalled. The proportion of longer-term ELs in secondary grades can vary considerably across districts and states, depending upon student characteristics, monitoring practices, quality of instruction, and the number and kind of exit criteria used (see NYC Department of Education, 2009; Thompson, 2013). Their stalled progress requires careful analysis to determine the underlying causes. Doing so typically uncovers weaknesses in progress expectations, curricular focus, instructional delivery, and assessment practices and can afford opportunities to improve each.

Finally, though perennially controversial for its association with such lightning-rod issues in the U.S. as immigration policy, national identity, and multiculturalism, the use of ELs' primary language in instruction in addition to English has a strong evidence base. When well-implemented, bilingual instructional methods facilitate access to early literacy development and academic content instruction while EL students develop English language proficiency (Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006). Substantial research evidence also highlights equivalent or modestly greater long-term academic achievement results in *English* using well-implemented bilingual instructional methods (Slavin & Cheung, 2005; Slavin et al., 2011). There is also solid evidence that bilingualism confers cognitive benefits regarding executive function, as well as metalinguistic and metacognitive benefits (Bialystock & Peets, 2010). Often overlooked, bilingualism and biliteracy also yield tangible crosscultural and economic value in a globalized world (Saiz & Zoido, 2005). Indeed, several states have recently instituted "seal of biliteracy" recognition programs[1] to signal their valuing of graduating students' ability to perform academically in more than one language. Viewing ELs' home language and culture as resources to be cultivated and leveraged, rather than as problems to be solved or eradicated, is a distinguishing feature of an assets orientation to EL students' education and development (Ruiz, 1984; Understanding Language, 2012a; Valenzuela, 1999).

Clearly, then, ELs are a diverse group, and important relationships exist among EL students' English- and primary-language proficiency, time in the school system, and academic progress and performance. Before exploring the implications of these, it is important to briefly consider the current policy context and the significant changes underway in SEA expectations of educators and students.

Next-Generation Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

Turnaround schools and the SEAs charged with supporting them must enact their strategies to improve instructional practices in a policy environment of increasing performance expectations. These expectations have enormous implications for ELs, their educators, and their families, and so merit a brief discussion.

First, the *new college- and career-ready academic standards greatly increase disciplinary language demands and deeply intertwine language use with the acquisition and demonstration of content knowledge, skills, and abilities*. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts, for example, expect students to comprehend and evaluate complex texts, construct effective arguments using textual evidence, discern a speaker's key points, request clarification, ask relevant questions, articulate and build on ideas, and confirm that they have been understood (CCSS ELA standards, p. 7). Similarly, the new Math standards

[1]See http://sealofbiliteracy.org/

require sophisticated language uses to enact mathematical practices, such as constructing arguments, building a logical progression of statements to explore conjectures, justifying conclusions, communicating them to others, and responding to others' arguments (CCSS Math standards, p. 6). Also, the recently-released Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) delineate practices that expect students to ask questions and define problems, construct explanations, engage in argument from evidence, and communicate information effectively. Obviously, competence in a subject area will necessarily include mastering the language-related practices of that subject, and teachers will be expected to foster all students' opportunities to engage in these practices and develop these language-intensive competencies.

Second, *next generation English-language proficiency (ELP) standards that have recently or are currently being developed reflect these increased academic language demands*. Federal law (ESEA Titles I and III) requires states to establish ELP standards that correspond to the academic language demands expressed in the new content standards. Therefore, many states—alone or in consortia—are carefully delineating the language functions associated with disciplinary practices in the content standards and increasing the rigor and relevance of their ELP standards to focus instructional practice on these more complex language uses, both during designated English language development (ELD) time and during content instruction (see CCSSO, 2012 for further explanation).

Third, *next generation academic content and ELP assessments will incorporate and assess these more rigorous language and content demands*. As test development blueprints, pilot testing, and publicly available related resources are revealing, the new assessments aligned to these new content standards will significantly increase the receptive and productive language uses required to enact the assessed disciplinary practices (ETS, 2012; Linquanti & Hakuta, 2012). In fact, at least one of the academic assessment consortia has been tagging its test items and performance tasks for level of linguistic complexity as part of an effort to understand how ELs at different ELP levels interact with items and tasks of different linguistic complexity (see Cook & McDonald, 2012).

Fourth, *state agreements regarding ESEA flexibility, Race to the Top Program requirements, and academic content and ELP assessment consortia participation will all affect school and district accountability policy and practices toward ELs and their teachers in varying ways*. Two examples illustrate the potential implications of this dynamic and evolving policy environment: Teacher evaluation practices need to reflect the special knowledge and skills required to effectively educate ELs and build capacity for providing formative feedback and professional development support to improve instructional practice (August et al., 2012); and states participating in any of the federally funded consortia (PARCC, Smarter Balanced, ELPA21, or WIDA ASSETS) need to move toward a common definition of EL, which will very likely require changes in EL identification, classification,

and reclassification policies and procedures (Linquanti & Cook, 2013). These substantial policy shifts will need to be very carefully managed in order to support and not undermine effective instructional practices with ELs.

Recommendations

The foregoing discussion provides context and briefly highlights some of the key issues and substantial challenges facing school and district educators attempting to improve practice and outcomes for ELs. Systemic challenges require systemic responses. While instructional improvements must ultimately be enacted by teachers and students in classrooms, states should consider policies, practices, and strategies that support district and school policies and practices to strengthen the performance of administrators, teachers, and EL students in turnaround schools. Some specific recommendations for state action that follow from the above discussion are provided next.

1. *State actors—through policy development and resource investment—can promote evidence-based district and school practices that help all students, particularly ELs*.

There is evidence about what districts and schools that are effective with ELs do compared to their less effective peers (e.g., Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010; Horvitz et al., 2009; Parrish et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2007). They know who their ELs are, can clearly articulate expected linguistic and academic goals for these students, and design instructional programs and services around their particular ELs' strengths and needs. They implement standards-based instructional programs that are coherent and aligned within and across grade levels within schools and across schools within districts. There is shared responsibility and distributed leadership around improving the quality of instruction, addressing both ELD and appropriately scaffolded content instruction to ensure that students are developing academic language and literacy while engaging meaningfully with grade-level content. Educators engage in timely and actionable assessment practices during the school year to focus instruction and regularly monitor and discuss student work, progress, and problems of practice. Students' home language and culture are valued as resources and assets, and there is strategic use of the home language either to develop bilingualism and biliteracy or to build background knowledge, facilitate comprehension, and increase the meaning and relevance of grade-level content.

States can incentivize and look for evidence of these practices in turnaround school plans and district support efforts and ensure that resources are dedicated to their development and implementation. How the latter is done is discussed next.

2. *State policymakers and leaders can leverage the technical assistance and professional development infrastructure to build teacher instructional capacity related to ELs.*

New college- and career-ready content standards necessitate a transformation in teacher and administrator professional learning (Learning Forward, 2013). Nowhere is this more important than for educators of ELs, as these students must master both content and corresponding English language development standards. States must work to ensure that their infrastructure of technical assistance and professional development helps build teacher instructional capacity for ELs and other language minority students. Particular focus should be directed to unpacking and understanding the new state standards, recognizing and fostering opportunities to develop sophisticated language uses through academic content instruction, and ensuring that ELD instruction focuses on communicative competencies and strengthening language functions found within the content area practices. Several states are engaged in innovative efforts in these areas. While these initiatives are in early or experimental stages, they exemplify thoughtful, technology-enhanced practice that is responsive to the challenges at hand. Three examples follow.

- **California** (the nation's largest EL-enrolling state) is developing a first-of-its-kind, English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELA/ELD) Curriculum Framework that will guide instructional practice and curricular materials development. This combined framework articulates guiding principles and provides instructional vignettes to show how teachers use the two sets of standards in tandem during content instruction and how designated ELD instruction can foster collaborative, interpretive, and productive language uses to engage in subject matter practices. Aligned with this effort, California is also funding and overseeing intermediate agencies' development of a series of online professional learning modules (PLMs) designed to help educators implement common core standards. Two of these PLMs focus on implementing the state ELD standards in conjunction with its content standards. These PLMs are designed to be used by teachers and administrators in facilitated professional learning communities focusing on key problems of instructional practice. The state is also funding, via federal Title III monies, a network of professional development and technical assistance providers in intermediary agencies (county offices of education), who are also trained and supported by the state's federally funded comprehensive center, to help underperforming districts and schools—including turnaround schools—identified under state and federal accountability systems to utilize these tools in districtwide improvement efforts.
- **North Carolina**, one of the southeastern states with the fastest-growing EL population, is partnering with Stanford University's Understanding Language initiative to develop and support a statewide, networked community of practitioners focused on strengthening teacher capacity to develop EL students' disciplinary uses of language during content instruction. Regional groups of district and school teams from across the state will

be trained in implementing common core-aligned model units of study in English-language arts and mathematics. For example, the ELA exemplar five-week unit—already piloted in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the state's largest EL-enrolling district—features a multimedia, multimodal curriculum that focuses students on analyzing and producing persuasive oral and written texts (Understanding Language, 2012b). Teachers will be further trained as trainers and supported to develop additional units of study through a massive online open course (MOOC) and will receive ongoing support via the state's Race to The Top regional support network.

- **Minnesota** is partnering with the Academic Language Development (ALD) Network[2]—a research and professional development collaborative of universities, SEAs, educators, and service providers—to build instructional capacity statewide to develop the academic language, literacy, and cognitive skills called for under new content and ELP standards. Network technical assistance providers are training Minnesota Department of Education design teams in ALD instructional practice frames and corresponding rubrics that articulate best practices for academic language and literacy development for ELs. In addition, Minnesota is working with the Network both to deliver webinars for educators and administrators statewide that explain and illustrate the practices, and to build capacity of regional professional development centers to train and support teachers and leaders to enact these instructional practices with ELs at their school sites.

3. *State policymakers can refine accountability frameworks to be more meaningful, useful, and responsive to ELs and their educators.*

As described above, substantial empirical evidence demonstrates the connection between students' English language proficiency and their ability to learn in English-medium classrooms and demonstrate knowledge on assessments using English. Since EL students enter at different levels of initial English proficiency, and it takes time to learn the more rigorous, academic uses of English signaled in new standards, new models of accountability are warranted to take these realities into account. NCLB helped shine a spotlight on the EL subgroup, but the law's shortcomings—proficient status-bar progress standards, an unstable EL cohort definition, incoherence between expectations for ELP progress under Title III and academic achievement of all students (100%) under Title I—are now readily apparent. While ESEA reauthorization continues to stall, states have, through their ESEA waivers, proposed and are beginning to implement new accountability models that provide more meaningful expectations and send clearer signals to educators, students, and other stakeholders. Texas, for example, is proposing to define rigorous progress expectations for ELs' English language development by initial language proficiency level and time in the state system

[2]See www.aldnetwork.org

and to also benchmark ELs' expected academic progress by time and initial ELP level. In this way, meaningful markers of linguistic and academic progress that are sensitive to ELs' starting points can be defined and measured. Several other states are considering similar approaches. Many EL researchers and policy experts (e.g., Hopkins et al., 2013; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013; Working Group on ELL Policy, 2011) have also proposed ways to stabilize the EL cohort in order to examine and report more accurately the long-term outcomes of all initial EL students, including current normatively-progressing ELs, longer-term ELs whose progress has stalled, and ELs who have met exit criteria. These more coherent frameworks increase the fairness and precision of the accountability system and allow it to send clearer signals to educators on which students are and are not progressing in rigorous and reasonable time frames. More refined accountability systems can also more accurately identify which underperforming schools and districts are improving at accelerating their students' progress.

4. *State and local leaders can ensure teacher evaluation policies recognize the special knowledge and skills required to effectively educate ELs and build capacity to provide formative feedback and professional development support to improve instructional practice.*

As implied by the instructional capacity building and accountability framework above, teacher evaluation policies need to recognize the interrelationship of ELP progress, time, and academic progress when considering the performance of ELs. Also, particularly at the secondary level, evaluation policies need to recognize that ESL/ELD teachers contribute to an EL student's ability to perform on academic content assessments in English. Recent rigorous research from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project has demonstrated that teacher evaluation systems yield more valid and reliable results when they reach beyond student test scores and incorporate a more balanced set of multiple measures (MET, 2013). These include multiple observations of teacher practice over time by trained peers with opportunities for actionable formative feedback and self-reflection and student perception surveys that both "reflect the theory of instruction defining expectations for teachers in the system" and that elicit student responses to their experience of teacher expectations, support, and feedback (MET, 2012, pp. 4–6). This approach to teacher evaluation also strengthens reciprocal accountability for instructional capacity-building and expected performance needed between educational policy makers and teachers (Elmore, 2002).

Such large EL-enrolling districts as Denver and Los Angeles are currently implementing teacher evaluation systems that include these kinds of multiple measures, phased in over multiple years, and that reflect their districts' focus on effective instructional strategies for ELs in all classrooms. Denver's *Framework for Effective Teaching*, for example, provides the foundation for the district's teacher evaluation system and targets pedagogical practices that are particularly

important for ELs, such as scaffolding students' interpretive, productive, and collaborative academic language uses, while also providing professional development to support teachers in using the new CCSS and ELP standards within the framework (see August et al., 2012, for more information). States can easily learn from these local efforts to apply the lessons from research evidence and adjust their state policies and frameworks accordingly.

5. *State policymakers can support dual-language instructional approaches where there are sufficient primary-language students, teacher expertise and materials, and community support.*

As noted earlier, there is substantial research evidence that use of dual-language instructional methods is beneficial to the development of EL students' literacy and content performance in English. While the positive effects of these methods have been small to moderate, there are additional (typically unmeasured) benefits of increased metacognitive and metalinguistic ability, as well as bilingualism and biliteracy. In schools without a sufficient primary language EL group, teacher expertise and materials, and community support to implement full dual-language programs, teachers with sufficient second language competence can utilize instructional supports in the student's primary language. For example, drawing attention to cognates, providing brief explanations in the home language, providing lesson preview and review, and teaching learning strategies in the home language all help to build background knowledge, facilitate comprehension in ELs with beginning levels of English proficiency, and build stronger home–school connections (Goldenberg, 2013).

Several states, including California, New York, and Illinois, have established "Seal of Biliteracy" programs to recognize those EL and native English-speaking students that are progressing toward and attaining communicative competence, literacy, and academic attainment in two languages. Some of these states are also framing college- and career-ready standards implementation for ELs using a bilingual/biliteracy development perspective. For example, New York has launched a *Bilingual Common Core Initiative* to provide resources and build the capacity of bilingual, ESL, and other language teachers to provide instruction that makes the Common Core state standards accessible to students at various language proficiency and literacy levels. The initiative explicitly values bilingualism both as a point of departure for language instruction and as goal for all language learners, including ELs and monolingual English speakers developing second language competence and biliteracy (NYS Bilingual Common Core Initiative, 2013). As such, New York has produced both New and Home Language Arts Progressions, parallel sets of developmental language progressions that help students access grade level language arts content found in New York's Common Core Learning Standards. Embedded within the progressions are clear articulations of the linguistic and academic content demands, as well as curricular examples to help teachers address the related linguistic demands in English and

other languages. Innovative approaches such as these recognize and build on the assets of ELs and the inherent value of their home languages and cultures, which in turn help to strengthen home–school connections.

Action Principles

Supporting schools engaged in turnaround is a challenge requiring coherent, sustained, and focused effort. As many of these schools serve ELs and other linguistic minority students, state education agencies must align policies and resources to systematically build the capacity of educators in these schools to strengthen instructional practice with these students. Fortunately, what has been shown to be effective practice with all students generally is applicable to ELs as well, but additional instructional supports are also needed (Goldenberg, 2013). The foregoing discussion has laid out the fundamental considerations regarding the EL subgroup and briefly explored some critical factors in the current policy context, including most obviously the implementation of new college- and career-ready standards and assessments and aligned ELP standards and assessments, as well as emerging differentiated accountability and evaluation systems. As states move forward, they should consider the following principles for action, distilled from recommendations elaborated above:

Promote evidence-based district and school practices that help all students, particularly ELs

- Consider key practices evident in districts and schools that are more effective with ELs, which include articulating clear linguistic and academic progress and achievement goals; implementing coherent and aligned instructional programs; distributing leadership and building internal accountability for developing students' daily academic uses of language via carefully scaffolded content instruction, as well as rigorous and aligned ELD instruction; strengthening instructional practice through timely and actionable assessment practices and regular discussions of student work; and tapping students' home languages and cultures as resources and assets.
- Incentivize and look for evidence of these practices in turnaround school plans and district support efforts, and ensure that resources are dedicated to their development and implementation.

Leverage the state's technical assistance and professional development infrastructure to build teacher instructional capacity related to ELs

- Ensure the technical assistance/professional development infrastructure supports teachers to unpack and understand the new state standards, recognize and foster opportunities to develop sophisticated language uses through academic content instruction, and ensure that ELD instruction builds communicative competencies and strengthens language functions found within content area practices.

Refine accountability frameworks to be more meaningful, useful, and responsive to ELs and their educators

- Recognize the relationship between EL students' academic language development and their ability to learn in English-medium classrooms and demonstrate knowledge on assessments using English.
- Set reasonable and rigorous, empirically informed expectations for ELD progress by initial ELP level and time and for academic progress and proficiency by time and expected ELP level (or actual if higher than expected).
- Stabilize the EL cohort to examine and report more accurately the long-term outcomes of all initial EL students, including current normatively-progressing ELs, longer-term ELs whose progress has stalled, and ELs who have met exit criteria.

Ensure teacher evaluation policies recognize the special knowledge and skills required to effectively educate ELs, and build capacity to provide formative feedback and professional development support to improve instructional practice

- Conduct multiple observations of teacher practice over time using trained peers, with opportunities for actionable formative feedback and self-reflection.
- Use student perception surveys that reflect the theory of instruction defining expectations for teachers and that elicit student responses to their experience of teacher expectations, support, and feedback.

Support dual-language instructional approaches where there are sufficient primary-language students, teacher expertise and materials, and community support to implement them effectively

- Recognize that dual language instruction can enhance early literacy development and academic content instruction while EL students develop English-language proficiency, improve literacy and content performance in English, increase metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities, and foster bilingualism and biliteracy.
- If dual language programs are not feasible, encourage primary-language support strategies (e.g., drawing attention to cognates, providing brief explanations or lesson preview/review, teaching learning strategies in the home language), which can build background knowledge, facilitate comprehension in ELs with beginning levels of English proficiency, and strengthen home–school connections.
- Consider supporting local or statewide "Seal of Biliteracy" recognition programs to signal that EL students' home languages and cultures are assets and resources to be developed.

References

August, D., Estrada, J., & Boyle, A. (2012). *Supporting English language learners: A pocket guide for state and district leaders*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from http://www.air.org/files/ELL_Pocket_Guide1.pdf

Bialystock, E., & Peets, K. (2010). Bilingualism and cognitive linkages: Learning to read in different languages. In M. Schatz & L. Wilkinson (Eds.), *The education of English language learners: Research to practice* (pp. 133–151). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Cook, G., Linquanti, R., Chinen, M., & Jung, H. (2012). *National evaluation of Title III implementation supplemental report: Exploring approaches to setting English language proficiency performance criteria and monitoring English learner progress.* Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development.

Cook, H. G., & MacDonald, R. (2013). *Tool to evaluate language complexity of test items* (WCER Working Paper No. 2013-5). Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Retrieved from http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/workingPapers/Working_Paper_No_2013_05.php

Cook, H. G., & Zhao, Y. G. (2011, April). *How English language proficiency assessments manifest growth*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Cook, H. G., Boals, T., Wilmes, C., & Santos, M. (2008). *Issues in the development of annual measurable achievement objectives for WIDA consortium states.* (WCER Working Paper No. 2008-2). Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Retrieved from http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/workingPapers/Working_Paper_No_2008_02.php

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2012). *Framework for English language proficiency development standards corresponding to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.* Washington, DC: Author.

Educational Testing Service. (2012). *Coming together to raise achievement: New assessments for the Common Core State Standards*. Princeton, NJ: Center for K–12 Assessment & Performance Management at ETS.

Elmore, R. (2002). *Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: The imperative for professional development in education*. Washington, DC: The Albert Shanker Institute.

Francis, D., Lesaux, N., & August, D. (2006). Language of instruction. In D. August & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth* (pp. 365–410). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gándara, P., Rumberger, R., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Callahan, R. (2003). English learners in California schools: Unequal resources, unequal outcomes. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(36), 1–54.

Gándara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Rumberger, R. (2008). *Resource needs for English learners: Getting down to policy recommendations*. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute Education Policy Center.

Goldenberg, C. (2013). Unlocking the research on English learners: What we know—and don't yet know—about effective instruction. *American Educator, 37*(2), 4–11.

Goldenberg, C., & Coleman, R. (2010). *Promoting academic achievement among English learners: A guide to the research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Horwitz, A., Uro, G., Price-Baugh, R., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Lewis, S., & Casserly, M. (2009). *Succeeding with English language learners: Lessons learned from the great city schools*. Washington DC: Council of the Great City Schools.

Hakuta, K., Butler, Y., & Witt, D. (2000). *How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency?* (Policy Report No. 2000-1). Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute.

Ho, A. (2008). The problem with "proficiency": Limitations of statistics and policy under No Child Left Behind. *Educational Researcher, 37*(6), 351–360.

Hopkins, M., Thompson, K. D., Linquanti, R., Hakuta, K., & August, D. (2013). Fully accounting for English learner performance: A key issue in ESEA reauthorization. *Educational Researcher, 42*(2), 101–108.

Koelsch, N., Walqui, A., Hamburger, L., Gaarder, D., Insaurralde, A., Schmida, M.,…Estrada, P. (2010). *What are we doing to middle school English learners? Findings and recommendations for change from a study of California EL programs.* Research report. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Learning Forward. (2013). *Seizing the moment: State lessons for transforming professional learning*. Retrieved from http://www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/seizing-the-moment.pdf

Linquanti, R. (2011). Strengthening assessment for English learner success: How can the promise of the common core state standards and innovative assessment systems be realized? In D. Plank & J. Norton (Eds.), *The road ahead for state assessments* (pp. 13–25). Palo Alto, CA and Cambridge, MA: Policy Analysis for California Education and Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.

Linquanti, R., & Hakuta, K. (2012). *How next generation standards and assessments can foster success for California's English learners* (PACE Policy Brief No. 12-1). Palo Alto, CA: Policy Analysis for California Education.

Measures of Effective Teaching Project. (2012). *Asking students about teaching: Student perception surveys and their implementation* (Policy and Practice Brief). Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Measures of Effective Teaching Project. (2013). *Ensuring fair and reliable measures of effective teaching: Culminating findings from the MET project's three-year study* (Policy and Practice Brief). Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Migration Policy Institute. (2011). *The United States fact sheet: Language and education*. Retrieved from http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/state2.cfm?ID=US

National Clearinghouse on English Language Acquisition [NCELA]. (2010). *Data and demographics population map. EL student growth over 10 years, by county, 1999/2000-2009/10.* Retrieved from http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/content/42_elgrowth00_10

New York City Department of Education, Office of English Language Learners. (2009). *Diverse learners on the road to success: The performance of New York City's English Language Learners*. Retrieved from http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/3B377E6B-5E22-4E63-A4DA-2B7FD14E5D62/57000/ELLPerformanceReport2009.pdf

New York State Bilingual Common Core Initiative. (2013). *Teacher's guide to implement the bilingual common core progressions*. Retrieved from http://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-bilingual-common-core-initiative

Parrish, T., Perez, M., Merickel, A., & Linquanti, R. (2006). *Effects of the implementation of Proposition 227 on the education of English learners, K–12: Findings from a five-year evaluation* (Final Report). Palo Alto, CA and San Francisco, CA: AIR and WestEd.

Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *Journal of the National Association of Bilingual Education, 2*, 15–34.

Saiz, A., & Zoido, E. (2005). Listening to what the world says: Bilingualism and earnings in the United States. *Review of Economics and Statistics, 87*(3), 523–538.

Saunders, W., & Marcelletti, D. (2013). The gap that can't go away: The Catch-22 of reclassification in monitoring the progress of English learners. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 35*(2), 139–156.

Slavin, R., Madden, N., Calderon, M., Chamberlain, A., & Hennessy, M. (2011). Reading and language outcomes of a multiyear randomized evaluation of transitional bilingual education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 33*(1), 47–58.

Slavin, R., & Cheung, A. (2005). A synthesis of research on language of reading instruction for English-language learners. *Review of Educational Research, 75,* 247–281.

Taylor, J., Stecher, B., O'Day, J., Naftel, S., & Le Floch, K. C. (2010). *State and local implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act* (Volume IX—Accountability under NCLB: Final Report). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Thompson, K. (2012). *Are we there yet? Exploring English learners' journey to reclassification and beyond* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

Thompson, K. (2013, April). *Questioning the long-term English learner label: How categorization can blind us to students' abilities*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Understanding Language Initiative. (2012a). *Principles for ELL instruction*. Retrieved from http://ell.stanford.edu/policy

Understanding Language Initiative. (2012b). *Teaching resources/English Language Arts*. Retrieved from http://ell.stanford.edu/teaching_resources/ela

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.

Walqui, A., & Heritage, M. (2012). *Instruction for diverse groups of English language learners*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Understanding Language Initiative.

Williams, T., Hakuta, K., Haertel, E., & Kirst, M. (2007). *Similar English learner students, different results: Why do some schools do better? A follow-up analysis, based on a large-scale survey of California elementary schools serving low-income and EL students*. Mountain View, CA: EdSource.

Wolf, M. K., Kao, J., Griffin, N., Herman, J., Bachman, P., Chang, S., & Farnsworth, T. (2008). *Issues in assessing English language learners: English language proficiency measures and accommodation uses* (Practice Review; CRESST Report No. 732). Los Angeles, CA: UCLA.

Working Group on ELL Policy. (2011). *Improving educational outcomes for English language learners: Recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Questions and answers.* Stanford, CA: Author. Retrieved from http://ellpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/QA.pdf

Building Rural District Capacity for Turnaround

Sam Redding and Herbert J. Walberg

Rural schools generally hold their own compared with urban and suburban schools when it comes to student achievement. However, when a rural school persistently underachieves, turning it around presents challenges unlike those in more populated settings. Especially, rural schools tend to be situated within small, rural districts with lean central office staff, geographic separation from external resources, and limited capacity for the heavy lifting of school turnaround.

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) administered a questionnaire on what senior state education agency (SEA) staff from 13 states observed about the implementation of turnaround strategies in rural SEAs.[1] An analysis of the questionnaire responses and the literature on rural schools shows that many of the problems rural educators face overlap considerably with those of urban and suburban educators, but some of their problems are distinctive and even unique. This chapter considers the strengths and unique challenges of rural local education agencies (LEAs) and schools and focuses on solutions for those identified to be turned around. The recommendations for the SEA address rural LEAs' perceived disadvantages and leverage the advantages of rural settings.

Background

This chapter draws on the previous review of the characteristics and optimal procedures and policies for improving rural schools (Redding & Walberg,

[1]Unpublished research of Redding, S. (2013, January): *Turnaround in Rural LEAs and Schools*. To protect their privacy, neither the names of the staff nor the states are disclosed here since their responses to questions were given with an understanding of confidentiality. Their answers, moreover, should not be construed as official SEA policies.

2012) and the responses to the CST's recent questionnaire administered to SEA officials. The Redding and Walberg review pointed out that before 1900, most American students went to small schools in small school districts in small, rural communities. Over recent decades, however, both schools and districts grew dramatically in size.

Districts merged and consolidated to grow in size as they decreased in number, from about 115,000 school districts at one time, many responsible for a single, sometimes one-room school a century and more ago, to about 15,000 districts today. In the half-century from 1940 to 1990, the size of the average U.S. school district rose from 217 to 2,637 students—a factor of more than 10—and the size of the average school rose from 127 to 653 (Walberg & Walberg, 1994). In the last two decades, districts (including those in rural areas and not including charter districts) grew smaller in number and larger in enrollment.

Strengths of Rural Communities

The fact that students in rural schools, across the board, achieve as well as their counterparts in suburban and urban areas attests to assets of rural communities that may be leveraged in school turnarounds. Among other studies of the impact of school district size on achievement, Walberg and Fowler (1987) analyzed the relationship between average test scores of third, sixth, and ninth graders in all New Jersey rural, suburban, and urban districts. Controlling for district socioeconomic status (SES) and taking per-student expenditures into account, the smaller the district, the higher the achievement. It is certainly true that small districts exist in urban and suburban areas and that some rural districts are large. This chapter's focus on the capacity of rural districts to manage school turnaround will assume that low-capacity rural districts are typically small.

What leads to generally higher achievement of smaller districts at reasonable cost? Close oversight of the school by a school board with strong commitment to the community can be an advantage. Although close community ties can also undermine a school board's impetus to make necessary changes in personnel who might be kin or close neighbors, school boards in small districts benefit from familiarity with the internal operations of their schools and the people who staff them.

The "social capital" inherent to communities in which people live in close proximity, bound by multiple relationships, and with personal connections to one another and each other's children is of immeasurable value. In a study of high-performing, high-needs rural schools, Barley and Beesley (2007) found that supportive relationships with families were strongly associated with the success of rural schools. Teachers in rural schools exhibit an impressively high concern for their students' lives beyond the classroom and accept responsibility for supporting their students' social and behavioral needs (Roeser & Midgley, 1997).

In all rural schools, moreover, certain characteristics may accrue positively to student motivation to learn and to their levels of achievement. Witte and Sheridan (2011) write:

> Because of their centrality within the community, rural schools routinely connect with families in multiple capacities as part of typical daily routines. Rural schools provide opportunities for community communication and participation. In many rural communities, the local school building is a point of pride for the community and houses sporting and cultural events, civic activities, and shelter during severe weather. Teachers serve as coaches and club sponsors, which means that they have frequent and varied contact with students at multiple age and academic levels and with their families. Administrators are often highly accessible, active members of the community, allowing them to connect with families in a variety of ways. (p. 153)

Although the opportunity for frequent contact among school personnel and students' families may be significant in rural communities, the quality of the interaction cannot be taken for granted. School personnel must intentionally take advantage of their interactions with families and community members to influence prevailing attitudes and behaviors that impact student learning.

Obstacles to School Turnaround in Rural LEAs and Schools

Some rural communities and schools may present unique challenges for educators, particularly when the district is small (low capacity to manage turnaround), remote (distant from support services), and serving a high-poverty population. Poverty rates are rising in some rural schools (Schafft, Prins, & Movit, 2008), and their communities suffer from a paucity of social and behavioral services for families (DeLeon, Wakefield, & Hagglund, 2003). Rural schools may experience high teacher turnover, with their teaching staff consisting of a disproportionate number of newly credentialed teachers who replace the teachers who leave (Monk, 2007). The pattern of school closures and district and school consolidation has disrupted many small communities and distanced families from their children's schools (Barley & Beesley, 2007). Limited resources require schools to do more with less (Monk, 2007).

Though the centrality of the school to rural community life may be an asset, it also places added demands on educators to serve functions beyond that of their primary purpose of education (National Education Association, 2008). Parents in rural schools attend school events more often than in urban and suburban communities, but they also talk less often with their children about school programs and interact less frequently with teachers than parents in other settings (Prater, Bermudez, & Owens, 1997). In closely knit rural communities, a distrust of "outsiders" often places barriers to collaboration between new school personnel and families (Owens, Richerson, Murphy, Jageleweski, & Rossi, 2007). This tendency

may be further aggravated by the high teacher turnover and some teachers' desire to live outside the community and commute to work.

Successful school turnaround seldom occurs due to the school's own change in direction without external pressure and support. The LEA is the likely channel for pressure and conduit for support, but the capacity of small, rural LEAs to manage the turnaround of its schools is limited by the size and narrow span of expertise of the central office and the distance from service providers. Studies of rural turnaround and the insights of SEA respondents to the Center on School Turnaround's questionnaire cite additional obstacles to school turnaround in rural districts.

Student Motivation to Learn in Rural Schools

Employment in rural areas has traditionally been linked to agriculture, and farm-related jobs did not require post secondary education. This has certainly changed over the years, as agribusiness has increasingly demanded a skilled and educated workforce. But community attitudes toward education sometimes lag behind the requirements of the workplace. Perhaps as a consequence of the depopulation in rural areas, rural educators often attest to a dampening effect on student aspirations where families do not see education as an essential vehicle to advancement in life, and the improved life chances an education provides require relocation away from a shrinking rural community. Many of the issues they face also confront urban and suburban educators, and rural communities offer several distinctive educational advantages. Low student motivation to learn is a problem often cited by rural educators, although the research does not clearly substantiate that this problem is greater in rural schools than in nonrural schools (Yang & Fetsch, 2007). Rather, it seems a widespread problem in most of the nation's schools—rural, urban, and suburban (Christensen & Horn, 2008).

Motivation to learn is typically defined as the interaction between the student's value for the learning task and the student's perception of self-efficacy in mastering the task (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Although Yang and Fetch (2007) found the perception of self-efficacy among rural students to be no less substantial than that of nonrural students, other studies indicate that rural students are inordinately inclined to not value the learning goals of their schools (Hardre, Crowson, DeBacker, & White, 2007). For rural students inhibited by a "low horizon" mindset, the educational remedies are similar as those for students in other settings. The centrality of the school to rural community life, however, places a greater responsibility on the rural school to elevate students' aspirations. Likewise, the avenues to higher academic achievement are largely the same in rural as in urban and suburban schools.

A few respondents to the SEA questionnaire shifted the "low horizon" problem from the students to the community and the school personnel. One respondent stated simply that there is a "lack of urgency about 'why our kids need to

be prepared for college.'" Another noted: "Many of the community members had a 'small town' mentality that they didn't think their school could be on a list for Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools." In the opinion of a third respondent, in many rural areas there is a deficiency in the "community appreciation of the value of an education."

Professional Practice in Rural Schools

With little district capacity to support its schools' improvement efforts and few education service providers, including SEAs nearby, the rural school may rely more heavily on its own resources and ingenuity to drive its improvement than elsewhere. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it requires teaming, defined purposes, ample planning, and disciplined work. Schools improve when professional practice improves, and good leadership and teaching practices are not different in rural than in nonrural schools.

When the remoteness of a rural community is a barrier to attracting and retaining educational leaders and teachers, the school's internal systems for ensuring consistent application of effective practice is paramount. The policies, programs, procedures, and practices must be engrained in the daily operations of the school in ways that optimize the productivity of current staff and readily assimilate new staff.

Lean and Low-Capacity LEAs and Schools

The process of recruiting, hiring, placing, evaluating, and supporting the improvement of school staff is typically a chief responsibility of the LEA. In rural LEAs, however, the central office itself is small and lacking in expertise for personnel management. "Rural LEAs often have smaller central office structures, with fewer leaders overseeing multiple programs. In some cases, the individual had the experience and capacity to manage the implementation of a School Improvement Grant (SIG) locally, but in many, SIG proved to be an overwhelming task initially," is how one questionnaire respondent explained the problem. Another state official explained how a lack of specialized skills impacts rural schools:

> Rural schools may not have curriculum directors, data specialists, assessment coordinators, subject-specific instructional coaches, or assistant principals. These roles either go unmet or fall to the person whose assignment most closely aligns. Or, it all falls to the principal, who is soon overwhelmed and cannot focus on the classroom instruction. That is where the SIG grant helps level the playing field a bit, allowing these schools to fund these positions for at least the duration of the grant and gives them a chance to think about how to sustain them after the grant funding ends. Some of these roles are just not filled.

Evaluation of SIG in rural schools and follow-up studies that track the sustainability of gains when resources are reduced will shed light on the impact

specialized personnel have on a turnaround and the ability of schools to retain such personnel or perpetuate their influences beyond the SIG grant period.

Human Capital in Rural Schools

Asked to name the biggest challenges facing turnaround efforts in rural schools, the SEA respondents to the questionnaire overwhelmingly cited matters of human capital. Recruiting, retaining, evaluating, and elevating the performance of leaders and teachers proves especially problematic in rural LEAs and particularly so in remote areas. One state official expressed concern about the requirements in the federal SIG program to replace principals and, in some models, a majority of school staff:

> The SIG requirement to replace the principal was very damaging to the process of building trust and partnership between the SEA and the LEAs and ignored rural challenges to recruit and retain quality, committed staff. There has been teacher and staff turnover that has occurred over time, with more strategy and intention than outlined by SIG requirements. Hiring and retaining high-quality staff and teachers continues to be a challenge with rural school environments. At the same time, maintaining support for and shared ownership of the SIG process has been difficult to establish and maintain with some school staff. Some staff and teachers have not been receptive to professional development or new instructional opportunities, hampering the progress of the effort.

This state official succinctly states the human capital problem that other officials named in pointing to challenges encountered in rural school turnaround. Another official in a largely rural, Western state, elaborated on this theme.

> Rural LEAs struggle with human capital issues in ways that seem to differ substantially from urban locations. Rural LEAs are often situated much farther away from universities and metropolitan areas from which they can recruit new and effective personnel. Therefore, they often find themselves in a situation in which they must strategically develop the human capital that they already have, when possible, and only let go of those who are the most difficult to improve. It makes the SIG turnaround model a very unlikely option in rural settings.

An additional element of human capital management in rural settings is the organizational structure. Though SIG expects collaboration among teachers for data analysis, many rural schools are very small. Many only have one teacher per grade level. This makes organizational change in the system very difficult. As an example, in a larger school, it is easier to develop structures and schedules that capitalize on the assets of the "many" in order to provide collaboration time for the "few" (e.g., scheduling PE and pull-out classes so multiple teachers can have a common collaboration time). This economy of scale is more difficult with small workforces.

"The pool of applicants for both leadership and teaching positions is significantly smaller in rural areas," a state official noted. For younger and older potential recruits at all levels, rural areas may be perceived to lack the economic and cultural advantages of cities and suburbs including, for example, shopping malls or religious and other social organizations (American Institutes for Research, 2012).

Human Capital in Rural LEAs

The LEA staff is usually smaller in rural school districts, but their responsibilities are just as important as those in cities that can afford large numbers of specialized staff, for example, those in several kinds of special education and second-language learning. Dedicated specialists may be reluctant to carry out responsibilities beyond their ken and even to work in the absence of colleagues in their own specialty.

An additional human capital issue in rural districts is related to community dynamics. In an urban setting, people are often "anonymous" in relation to their local school. However, in rural communities, everybody knows everyone...and their business. The school board chair may be married to or the cousin of or the brother-in-law of the worst teacher in the district. The principal may also be the elder at the local church. In other words, influence can be unduly disseminated because of the social structures, making the organizational politics of rural districts more challenging than in some of their urban counterparts. Thus the problem of human capital is deeper than the paucity of candidates for recruitment. The nature of rural communities, itself, complicates personnel decisions. As one SEA official observed: "Changing the culture of the school is harder because staff members are alumni or other long-term residents who don't always have a broader vision of what K–12 education can/should provide."

Access to Technical Assistance and Professional Development

Rural LEAs are usually far from key resources such as technical assistance easily accessed by urban schools. Service providers may have to drive for several hours to reach rural schools, which makes their recruitment difficult and may add to service costs. Being smaller, moreover, rural LEAs and schools have smaller budgets from federal and state sources to purchase services. Thus, rural educators may face higher costs and fewer services. Rural education leaders cannot easily send staff to urban centers since substantial transportation and ground costs may be incurred, and substitute pools are likely to be smaller in their communities.

One SEA respondent noted: "In rural LEAs, there are fewer opportunities for professional development. Due to multiple job-related assignments, the district/school may not have internal specialists to provide ongoing PD. In addition, these schools must travel longer distances to participate in PD when available in the state or region. Smaller budgets and juggling the LEA needs among a small staff

makes it difficult to find substitutes and/or release staff to attend off-site PD." Another respondent emphasized the paucity of time available for instructional improvement: "With a small amount of staff in some of the rural schools, it is hard to find the time to meet and work on strategies/interventions when one teacher wears many hats."

Overcoming the Obstacles

The obstacles to school turnaround faced by rural LEAs are largely those of human capital, which includes recruitment and retention of quality staff, access to resources for professional development, lack of specialized staff, and limitations in exposing students to a rich curriculum, expertly provided.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

SEAs can be helpful in solving these problems by allocating special resources, staff, and time. SEA staff can inform LEA and school staff about solutions that have worked well in rural schools. Young, idealistic Teach for America teachers, for example, have been helpful as beginning teachers with special assistance from school, district, and state professionals, as well as serving as co-teachers with successful teachers before assuming their full responsibilities similar to those of conventionally trained teachers.

Similar examples for an SEA role in recruiting leaders and teachers for rural and other hard-to-staff schools have also proven worthwhile. Some rural recruiters travel to college job fairs and inform potential recruits that they will themselves be taught and given experiences to begin a highly successful professional career. Their recruitment conversation makes clear what the LEA can do for the new teacher and vice versa. Even though they may not keep beginners long, they seek the best beginners with positive attitudes toward school turnaround. An SEA questionnaire respondent put it this way:

> Many of our rural LEAs have employed "Teach for America (TfA)" teachers. These teachers have proven to be very effective in a number of our settings. Realizing the time limitation around TfA, our LEAs have been encouraged to engage in team teaching, allowing for a new teacher to teach alongside a TfA teacher, work collaboratively, and prepare to "take over."
>
> One of our rural LEAs travels to job fairs at colleges that are out of state and has developed a recruitment approach that says they will teach new teachers how to be really good. They make it about what the LEA can do for the new teacher and vice versa. They know they won't be able to keep the teachers long, so they plan for it and just expect to try and get new, young teachers fresh out of college who have a can-do attitude.
>
> Also, successful rural LEAs have district and school leaders who work strategically with the board of trustees to ensure community politics don't interfere with school improvement. For example, they report regularly on progress and success to keep the conversations oriented toward the right things.

An environment of success and collaboration is attractive to potential recruits. "The environment of success that one of our districts has achieved in a small rural town in the delta has caused a 'line-up' of teachers wanting to now teach in that district when they used to not be able to find enough teachers," a state official observed.

SEAs can encourage district boards and central office leaders to discourage community politics that interfere with staff recruitment and replacement necessary for school turnaround. Montana (see next chapter) intentionally included school board development in its SIG and related school turnaround programs.

Differential pay regimes enable rural districts to attract candidates for hard-to-fill positions. "Some schools have had to offer a stipend or additional pay to get the appropriate staffing," a state official offered. Another state official explained the state's role in salary differentiation: "We conducted a statewide salary study that recommended efforts to shift funding structures statewide to support a differentiated scale to support recruitment and retention." One state official stated: "We encourage rural districts to provide bonuses for hard-to-find certification area teachers." Other questionnaire respondents noted that SIG funds were used to incentivize employment, reward staff who increase achievement, and contract with Teach for America and The New Teacher Project—a nonprofit organization established in 1997 to place effective teachers in schools with poor and minority students.

One state official reported on the state's incentive program to repay teachers' student loans and pay moving expenses when they took positions in hard-to-staff districts. Rural districts are among the most obvious recipients of this benefit.

Careful assignment of staff to optimize the available pool of talent is also important. "A lot of time it is shifting current staff around to make the teacher work at his or her best ability and strengths," a questionnaire respondent noted.

Expanding the pool of available school leaders through regional Leadership Academies is how one state increases the likelihood that rural districts can select leaders prepared for the work:

> These programs were approved to offer professional development and alternative administrative licensure to aspiring principals who will lead low-performing and high-needs schools. Participants meet weekly to learn from each other and focus on a case-study curriculum. These principals-to-be also get hands-on learning as they complete a full-time, year-long clinical residency experience in an area school. Thanks to special partnerships among participating school districts, community colleges, and universities, many of these aspiring principals can earn credit toward a Masters in School Administration when they complete this program.

One state official explained the combination of SEA efforts to expand the talent pool and incentivize employment in rural districts. "The SEA has developed programs to license nontraditional teachers and to encourage the use of

Teach for America. The SEA and LEAs are also providing financial incentives to master principals to relocate into rural areas."

Finally, states are assisting LEAs with the hiring process. One respondent noted that the SEA provided "organized materials for principal hiring including a job posting, principal competency resources, and interview questions/process. These are available electronically by email or flash drive." The salient point is that the SEA can play a strong and helpful role in assisting rural LEAs with the recruitment of effective leaders and teachers.

Staff Development

Encouraged by SEAs, rural LEAs in a given geographical area can create formal and informal consortia to plan common professional development days in which they bring in providers and share the costs. Rural LEA leaders can also seize opportunities to network professionally with other leaders to help them improve their knowledge and skills. For example, they can take advantage of the SEA-sponsored professional development networks of support offered in localities throughout the state.

A state official described the efficiency of district consortia. "Some of our rural LEAs have begun to form informal consortia and develop common professional development days, in which they bring in providers and share the costs. This reduces travel costs for personnel and maximizes the leverage they have for the expenses they incur." Another questionnaire respondent added: "The rural LEAs that seem most successful seem to take the opportunities to network professionally with other leaders in order to help them improve their knowledge and skills. For example, they take advantage of the state-offered professional development networks of support that we offer. This helps the ones that are committed long term to have a network of peers to reach out to in their regions to be able to bounce ideas off of."

Intermediate agencies in states are natural organizational structures through which the SEA can influence and incentivize the formation of cooperatives that provide services for rural LEAs that they are not able to provide themselves. In many states, regional or intermediate agencies are well established (e.g., Board of Cooperative Education Services in Colorado, Intermediate School Districts in Michigan). In other states, new regional structures have been established for the purpose of promoting school turnaround and improvement. For example, Tennessee recently created Centers for Regional Excellence to focus on turnaround and improvement in each region of the state.

The SEA officials reported various state-provided professional development opportunities, including training in specialized skill areas for SIG school personnel, typically delivered regionally to accommodate the travel barriers in rural districts. One state official described a Teacher Leader Development Symposium "to grow capacity in local schools/districts that the state facilitates in alignment

with our teacher growth work statewide through the new evaluation system. Also, our Turnaround Leadership Cadre is designed to develop principals who have the knowledge and skills to do the work."

Coherence in state capacity-building initiatives results from the SEA's internal coordination across its various departments with respect to all aspects of K–12 schooling but especially professional development. One state official explained:

> We've attempted to develop an integrated strategy that pulls together a few different things to meet the needs of rural schools. First, we recognize that building the capacity of existing personnel is the number one need. Therefore, we focus on building the leadership capacity of administrators and teacher leaders to turn around and support their own teachers rather than rely on outsiders. The delivery mechanism has to overcome the problem of distance, though. Therefore, we retain school improvement funds (with LEA permission) and operate a system of technical assistance in which we can control the costs (e.g., the [State] Building Capacity Project, the Superintendents Network of Support, the Network of Innovative School Leaders). In that way, we can be deliberate about when and how to send technical assistance to the LEA versus when to bring the leaders together in a central location.

SEAs in states with rural LEAs involved in turnaround work are taking a variety of approaches to overcome the human capital obstacle in rural areas, particularly employing distance technologies that can deliver large amounts of useful information and insights relevant to rural education. The SIG program has given particular focus to these efforts.

Staff Evaluation

Almost by definition, the shortcomings of rural districts and schools in turnaround are at least partly attributable to inadequacies of leadership, teachers, and other staff. At the same time, it is difficult to fairly and accurately identify those who are not performing well, and their replacements can be traumatic for all schools and districts. SEAs can be helpful in developing and supplying the policies and practices to evaluate LEA and school personnel. Alternatively, LEAs themselves can develop the means for staff evaluation. In either case, the means to be successful should be expeditious, objective, fair, as humane as possible, and in conformity with SEA policy and the law. The U.S. Department of Education, through Race to the Top, SIG, and ESEA flexibility, has stressed the importance of robust teacher and leader evaluation systems for all districts and has encouraged states to lead the way with this reform.

As one questionnaire respondent stated: "The teacher evaluation system helped raise awareness of the need for some staff transitions and provided an opportunity for focused professional development plans, both for individual teachers and whole-staff training." Ideally, formative evaluation would be

employed, that is, weaknesses would be identified, improvements suggested and checked, and periodically reevaluated. Turnaround situations, however, make formative evaluation insufficient, and summative evaluation must be chosen. This often necessitates dismissal, which raises the question of how a rural LEA can attract high-quality replacement staff.

Distance Technologies

SEAs potentially can have their greatest positive impact on rural LEAs and schools by developing distance programs crafted to the state's education needs and curriculum requirements and making the programs suitable for rural educators. As pointed out in the research review in the opening pages of this chapter, the distinctive characteristic of rural schooling is low population density, which means that, generally, rural districts have smaller schools and that resident families are often remote from one another. Various forms of distance education have long served rural families starting with written correspondence instruction, still employed in Australia's "outback."

Computer and internet technology, particularly instantly interactive methods tailored for individual abilities and interests of students, makes distance methods increasingly attractive, feasible, and employed as evidenced by "virtual schools" and other modern developments. Academics continue to study these technological transformations (Walberg & Twyman, 2013). At the Harvard Business School, Clayton Christensen revived such thinking about industries in general and argued that "disruptive technologies" are likely to transform schools (Christensen, 2006; Christensen & Horn, 2008).

Such developments reflect the broad changes in the American economy and society and are widely appealing to young people who are often much more facile with computers and the internet than older adults. Since a fundamental obstacle to rural education is distance, distance education is perhaps the most promising solution to their problem (Walberg & Twyman, 2013).

Technological change is leading to new products, services, and forms of organization, management, transportation, advertising, and financing. The internet is replacing traditional publishing; digital is replacing film photography; television, cable, DVDs, and downloadable media are replacing theaters; mobile cell phones are replacing pay phones and hardwired home phones.

Today, Google, Yahoo, iTunes, and other internet technologies challenge newspapers, book publishing, and music distribution. Contrary to the views of some long experienced educators, computer-based methods are at least as effective as traditional classroom teaching. As pointed out in *Improving Student Learning* (Walberg, 2011), the most extensive synthesis of research covering 232 control-group studies found that student achievement, attitude, and retention in online instruction were at least as high and often superior to traditional classroom teaching. Eight separate meta-analytic reviews revealed that offline

computer-based instruction had superior effects on student achievement. On average, students gained more knowledge in computer-based instruction and took more pleasure in learning than their counterparts in standard classrooms. Much of this research was decades old, and the newer technologies undoubtedly are becoming more effective and cost-efficient (Walberg & Twyman, 2013). As exemplified by Khan Academy, they are also becoming much more widely used.

A recent survey of the public, moreover, showed about a quarter thought middle and high school students should get credit for online courses (Howell, Peterson, & West, 2011). Expanded access to electronic media offers today's teachers and students, especially those in rural areas, effective and potentially cheaper new ways to teach and learn. In the long run, instructional technology is likely to prove increasingly more effective, cost efficient, and time saving than regular classroom teaching since technologies, particularly computer and internet technologies, are generally improving with time.

New electronic media can add sound, color, animation, and interactivity to text, adding stimulation for engagement. The internet can offer instantaneous and free, or inexpensive, access to content. When low-speed internet connections, slow computers, or both are a concern, CDs or DVDs provide large amounts of material which can be distributed at a low cost. Providers' websites or files on local servers also can provide access to materials for individual students or staff in education centers, schools, libraries, and classrooms—both for small-scale specific distribution and for uniform, large-scale curriculum adoption. However, CDs and DVDs cannot be easily updated like material on the internet—material that, like printed matter, should be vetted for accuracy, currency, and appropriateness of content (Walberg, 2011).

Policymakers at the state and national levels increasingly seem to agree on the value of having a stable set of specific curriculum offerings and standards, and some emphasize a core curriculum for the whole country.[2] This would make it far more worthwhile to develop online programs carefully designed and matched to the agreed-upon content and standards. As shown by many studies in economies of scale, spending sufficient funds for high-quality programs would increase learning and reduce the unit costs to the extent that increasingly large numbers of students are taught using this technology.

Conclusions

Being small is not necessarily a handicap for a school or a district, and neither is being rural. In fact, small, rural districts and schools generally perform well. But when a persistently low-achieving school is remotely located in a low-capacity, rural district, the district encounters unique challenges in managing a turnaround. These low-capacity, rural LEAs with persistently low-achieving schools stand in the greatest need of support from their SEAs. Listed below are

[2]Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/

action principles for SEAs with low-capacity LEAs attempting to turn around their low-achieving schools.

Action Principles

- Disseminate information and sponsor conferences on ways rural LEAs and schools can best leverage the strengths of rural communities, such as the close attention of local school boards, the centrality of the school to community life, and the multiple connections among families.
- Help LEAs and schools ameliorate the "low-horizon mindset" that may restrict the aspirations of rural students and their families through distance learning, travel exchanges, college- and career-awareness programs, and similar initiatives.
- Provide training and information for rural school board members and administrators on human capital management and school improvement and turnaround.
- Expand the pool of leader and teacher talent available for recruitment by rural schools through alternate routes to certification, in-service leadership preparation programs, and state-fostered relationships with Teach for America, Troops to Teachers, and other human capital groups.
- Encourage college and university education programs to include coursework on rural education and collaborate with rural LEAs for regional job fairs.
- Incentivize employment in rural LEAs through salary differentiation, bonuses, loan repayment, and payment for travel expense.
- Organize and incentivize regional consortia, including those through intermediate agencies, of rural LEAs to coordinate their professional development activities.
- Expand and leverage distance technologies for professional development as well as student access to rich curriculum.

References

American Institutes for Research. (2012). *Hiring quality school leaders: Challenges and emerging practices*. Naperville, IL: Author.

Barley, Z. A., & Beesley, A. D. (2007). Rural school success: What can we learn? *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 22*, 1–16.

Christensen, C. M. (2006, December). Disruptive innovation for social change. *Harvard Business Review*, 94–96.

Christensen, C. M., & Horn, M. B. (2008). How do we transform our schools? *Education Next, 8*(3), 13–19.

DeLeon, P. H., Wakefield, M., & Hagglund, K. J. (2003). *The behavioral health care needs of rural communities*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Hardré, P. L., Crowson, H. M., DeBacker, T., & White, D. (2007). A multi-theory study of high school students' beliefs, perceptions, goals, and academic motivation. *Journal of Experimental Education, 75*(4), 247–269.

Howell, W. G., Peterson, P. E., & West, M. R. (2011). PEPG Survey-2011. *Education Next*. Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/files/EN-PEPG_Complete_Polling_Results_2011.pdf

Monk, D. (2007, Spring). Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas. *Future of Children, 17*(1), 155–174.

National Education Association. (2008). *Rural education*. Washington, DC: Author.

Owens, J. S., Richerson, L., Murphy, C. E., Jageleweski, A., & Rossi, L. (2007). The parent perspective: Informing the cultural sensitivity of parenting programs in rural communities. *Child Youth Care Forum, 36*, 179–194.

Prater, D. L., Bermudez, A. B., & Owens, E. (1997). Examining parental involvement in rural, urban, and suburban schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 13*, 72–75.

Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (2012). *Promoting learning in rural schools*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/about/publications.html

Roeser, R., & Midgley, C. (1997). Teachers' views of issues involving students' mental health. *Elementary School Journal, 98*, 115–133.

Schafft, K. A., Prins, E., & Movit, M. (2008). *Poverty, residential mobility, and persistence across urban and rural family literacy programs in Pennsylvania.* University Park, PA: Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy.

Walberg, H. J. (2011). *Improving student learning*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Walberg, H. J., & Fowler, W. J. (1987). Expenditure and size efficiencies of public school districts. *Educational Researcher, 16*, 5–15.

Walberg, H. J., & Twyman, J. S. (2013). *Advances in distance education.* In M. Murphy, S. Redding, & J. Twyman (Eds.), *Handbook on innovations in learning* (pp. 167–180). Philadelphia, PA: Center on Innovations in Learning, Temple University; Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.centeril.org/

Walberg, H. J., & Walberg, H. J., III (1994, June-July). Losing local control. *Educational Researcher, 23*(5), 19–26.

Witte, A. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2011). Family engagement in rural schools. In S. Redding, M. Murphy, & P. Sheley (Eds.), *Handbook on family and community engagement* (pp. 153–156). Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org

Yang, R. K., & Fetsch, R. J. (2007, June 15). The self-esteem of rural children. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 22*(5). Retrieved from http://www.jrre.psu.edu/articles/22-5.pdf

Big Sky Hope: How Montana's SEA Supports Turnaround in American Indian Schools

Denise Juneau, Mandy Smoker Broaddus, and Deborah Halliday

Six months before the U.S. Department of Education announced the School Improvement Grant program in 2010, newly elected Office of Public Instruction (OPI) State Superintendent Denise Juneau convened her cabinet to develop a new strategy for improving student achievement in the state's lowest performing schools. Aware that most of the struggling schools were located on or adjacent to the seven Indian reservations in Montana, Juneau, a member of the Mandan and Hidatsa tribes, launched Montana Schools of Promise to turn these schools around.

The schools identified for attention through Montana Schools of Promise shared a common set of characteristics: all were very small and very rural—two of the schools' districts lacked cell phone service and several struggled with internet connectivity—and all were located on an Indian reservation. School management was often chaotic, and staff turnover resulted in inconsistent and dysfunctional work environments. Graduation and attendance rates were the lowest in the state, and students suffered from an entrenched culture of low achievement and low expectations. As with many other reservation communities, local families struggled with high rates of unemployment, substance abuse, domestic violence, and suicide. However, these communities also presented unique opportunities, strengths, and resiliency factors that could be leveraged for positive turnaround efforts.

Juneau appointed a three-person team—consisting of the Title I Director, Director of Indian Education, and a Policy Advisor to the Superintendent experienced in community and family engagement—to develop an approach that would be research-based and have the potential to be effective with schools

serving American Indian students. The team reviewed existing research, convened an interagency workgroup to share information and efforts of different programs working with the school systems, and hosted stakeholder meetings on-site at several reservations with tribal councils, elected officials, teachers and school staff, students, schools board trustees, community members, and families to review student achievement data and to seek local input.

OPI staff recognized that any approach to improving these schools needed to involve an "all hands on deck" approach to support improved instruction, better decision making at the administrative and board level, more engagement with students and their families, and a shared sense of responsibility from the school, the local community, and OPI. Staff adapted the High-Poverty High-Performing (HPHP) Readiness Model from Mass Insight, a Boston-based research organization (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007). The model seemed most promising because it recognized the importance of social supports and shared responsibility among stakeholders: Readiness to Teach (instructional practices), Readiness to Act (school board efficacy and community engagement), and Readiness to Learn (student social/emotional/behavioral supports; Calkins et al., 2007).

In 2010, the state received $11.5 million through the SIG program which gave the Montana Schools of Promise initiative a much-needed boost. Montana became the only state in the country to use SIG funds to work solely with public schools on reservations: Frazer High School on the Fort Peck Reservation, Pryor K–12 on the Crow Reservation, and Lame Deer 7–12 on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. All three districts chose to use the turnaround model, one of the four approaches to school turnaround available under the federal SIG program.

Early signs show the effort is working. Two years into the SIG grant, student performance outpaces the state: reading scores are up 15.5 points (state mean 1.6 points); math scores are up 3.6 points (state mean 0.7 points); science scores are up 2.3 points (state mean 1.6 points). The achievement gap is beginning to close.

Montana CRT Reading Means Percentage change from previous year in parentheses				
	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Statewide	277.1 (+1.6%)	278.7 (+1.6%)	279.6 (+0.9)	280.3 (+0.7)
SIG Schools	239.6 (-0.3%)	239.1 (-0.5%)	245.6 (+6.5%)	254.6 (+9.0%)

Montana CRT Math Results				
	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Statewide	262.5 (+1.4%)	264.6 (+2.1%)	264.9 (+0.3%)	265.3 (+0.4%)
SIG Schools	225.8 (+1.7%)	226.1 (+0.3%)	227.2 (+1.1%)	228.7 (+1.5%)

Montana CRT Science Results				
	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Statewide	253.7 (+1.1%)	255.0 (+1.3%)	254.8 (-0.2%)	256.6 (+1.8%)
SIG Schools	218.6 (+2.4%)	222.0 (+3.4%)	220.2 (-1.8%)	224.3 (+4.1%)

There are other indications that the turnaround effort is bearing fruit. For instance, reflecting noticeable improvements in both expectations and quality of instruction, students told OPI staff that their "school now feels like a real school, where real learning happens." The OPI's work with school board trustees has won the respect and trust of school board members, who are now working with updated board policies and following meeting protocols that result in more efficient meetings that truly focus on student achievement.

Launching Montana Schools of Promise

Juneau introduced Montana Schools of Promise through a series of visits to local communities titled Communities Coming Together for Education, during which Juneau and her staff met with tribal councilors, key tribal program staff (e.g., health services, tribal colleges), school staff, students, and elected officials. In several of the communities Juneau visited, it was the first time a State Superintendent had ever visited the local school. The visits culminated in community dinners and discussion, during which parents, families, and community members were asked to discuss their hopes and dreams for their children's education and to explore how schools and communities can work together to improve local schools.

To help guide the work between OPI and local schools and communities, OPI staff developed four core values: transparency, collaboration, vision, and capacity building. By developing these core values and sharing them with each school, OPI strove to establish a culture of open communication and trust.

This groundwork was critical to build the trust that was needed to implement the SIG grant because OPI developed a strategy that required an unprecedented level of state agency engagement with locally controlled public schools. From the onset of planning, OPI staff knew that the local schools lacked capacity to implement the requirements of SIG. Instead of granting money to districts,

OPI developed a unique structure which was allowable within SIG guidelines, but which took time and effort to receive approval from the U.S. Department of Education: in Montana, OPI maintained control of the SIG funds, awarded SIG funds to participating districts, and staffed the effort with OPI employees.

To formalize local commitment to the work, the OPI developed implementation agreements and memorandums of understanding with each school district that required the school board and the local teachers' union to agree to work with OPI to implement the requirements of SIG. Because the SIG requirements included controversial elements (e.g., teacher evaluation) and innovative elements (e.g., extended learning time for teachers and students), Juneau reached out to the leadership of the Montana Education Association– Montana Federation of Teachers to discuss both the requirements of SIG and the opportunity SIG represented for the state: an opportunity to truly help school districts that had been troubled for years. These early conversations, and a foundation of goodwill that existed between Juneau and the union, resulted in the union's support for the initiative and their participation in site visits to each school to discuss the agreements and to reach consensus on moving forward.

Strategic Approaches

The OPI structured the staffing of the SIG program along the lines of the HPHP Readiness Model. The *Readiness to Learn* component calls for student social/emotional/behavioral supports and increased parental and community engagement. OPI hired a Community Liaison for each school—someone who works on a daily basis with students, families, and community/tribal organizations to coordinate student supports and to engage families through home visits, community gatherings, and regular communications. Youth-driven programming has flourished as OPI staff work with students and community organizations to develop after school clubs, attendance incentives, and a statewide youth council.

To more directly impact the social and mental well-being of students and staff, the OPI brought in agency supports such as the Montana Behavioral Institute (positive behavioral supports) and contracted with the University of Montana's National Native Children's Trauma Center to work with adults and students on issues related to trauma, safe school climate, and respect.

In addition, the OPI secured a two-year, $600,000 grant from the Montana Mental Health Trust to pilot school-based mental health wraparound services in the communities being served by SIG. The wraparound model OPI employed is a strengths-based, community-driven approach to providing supports for struggling youth. Local community members work with OPI to identify and prioritize students who are in need of intensive support and help to build a team of people who work with the youth and family to build strategies and approaches for the youth's well-being. This work is proving to be a critical component to supporting students' ability to learn and to stay in school.

The *Readiness to Teach* component specifies curriculum, instructional planning and delivery, and classroom management supports to help improve classroom instruction. For each school, OPI hired an Instructional Leader who works with teachers daily. After consulting with curriculum experts, OPI staff introduced new math and language arts curriculum and a literacy intervention in the SIG schools. OPI staff selected the programs based on a track record of demonstrated success in schools across the country, including schools that work with American Indian populations. The Instructional Leader assists in the implementation of the curriculum and works with all teachers on strategies to improve instructional practices. The on-site staff are supported by a Teaching and Learning Coordinator who works at the state level, planning, supporting, and coordinating the focus and the flow of professional development.

The *Readiness to Act* component includes support for administrative and board decision-making practices and structures, as well as support for school-based teams who help to plan and implement SIG requirements and other locally identified improvement priorities. OPI hired a Transformational Leader for each school, who coordinates the local OPI staff and works with school administrators to implement the SIG requirements and to integrate improvements into the school system. OPI also provided each school with a School Board Coach who attends every board meeting and works with the trustees to revise school board policies and to support decision-making processes that are focused on student achievement.

The Instructional Leader and Transformational Leader work hand-in-hand with teaching staff and administrators to build local capacity to make data-driven decisions. All SIG Schools of Promise are trained in Response to Intervention (RtI) to assist school teams' use of data to inform instruction and to determine when and if to use interventions. OPI staff on-site guide the learning process with school staff and ensure schools participate in statewide RtI training to lessen discomfort with data. Now, the use of data to inform discussions is much more routine in the schools.

To build capacity for ongoing school improvement efforts, as well as to ensure local engagement with the work of SIG, each school develops an implementation plan called the District Action Plan (DAP), which is an annual process of identifying the year's goals and priorities for meeting SIG requirements. Each SIG school has a school improvement team consisting of teachers, staff, board members, and students. This team, assisted by on-site OPI staff, develop their DAP each year. The DAP is organized around the four recommendations from the Institute of Education Sciences' (Herman et al., 2008) practice guide on school turnaround: 1) signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership; 2) maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction; 3) provide visible improvements early in the turnaround process (quick wins); and 4) build a committed staff.

This on-the-ground staffing support has enabled the OPI to ensure that SIG requirements are implemented. Direct side-by-side coaching of teachers and staff has allowed for the implementation of professional development to be more tailored and responsive to staff needs. The OPI worked with the state's teachers' union and local school personnel to develop a teacher and staff evaluation system that is helping to guide ongoing professional development. School board policies and procedures have been brought up to date and board meetings made more functional and focused on increasing student achievement.

Ongoing Challenges

The SIG program has provided OPI staff with an unprecedented opportunity to learn more about what works—and what doesn't work—to dramatically improve struggling schools. There have been many components of the SIG work that have met with success, as outlined above.

Yet while student test scores are steadily improving, and students and adults in the schools and in the community are commenting on increased functionality, there are ongoing challenges. Student attendance continues to be a real challenge. Efforts ranging from student-led incentive programs to Community Liaisons working with school staff to contact students when they do not show up for school have had only modest impacts.

A core focus OPI staff have employed throughout the SIG implementation is motivational and team-building programming to keep school staff and community members engaged with the very difficult, demanding work of targeted school improvement. This has proved to be a constant challenge, and OPI has experienced mixed success in its efforts to turn around years of difficult relationships, poor communication, and a sense of "initiative fatigue" at the schools.

The four core values OPI developed to guide the SIG work—transparency, collaboration, vision, and capacity building—were very helpful in that they "raised the bar" of what a typical agency-to-school relationship can be. It proved to be challenging to set a new path of working together, however, because the OPI is both a collaborator and the enforcer of the SIG requirements. OPI staff strove to develop a culture of mutuality, yet there were times throughout the grant where OPI staff had to push hard on reforms that SIG required and would otherwise not be priorities for the school districts.

Two specific components of the structure of the SIG program hampered OPI's efforts. First, the turnaround model requires that principals who have served the school for more than two years be replaced. This blanket requirement caused the removal of a popular principal in one high school, and it proved challenging to find a replacement principal. Rural communities disproportionately suffer from a small pool of talented candidates for demanding jobs, such as a school administrator, in a struggling school where the nearest movie theatre can be over an hour away and housing is often well below substandard. In addition, rural

communities tend to foster close-knit relationships, and an influential subset of the local community rejected the SIG work on the grounds that the principal had been removed. The work at this particular school slowed down to such an extent that OPI ended its agreement with the school to implement SIG. Soon after, the school board reinstated the principal. OPI requested the USDOE provide a rural exception to the principal replacement requirement, yet that request was denied.

A second challenge is the three-year time frame for the SIG grant. As described, there have been success stories in all aspects of the project. Students now enter schools where they are appropriately placed in courses that meet their instructional needs. School teams are engaged in RtI training and work on-site with their data. School administrators participate in monthly school finance calls. School board trustees focus on student achievement. The challenge is to ensure these efforts continue beyond the grant period, when financial resources diminish and OPI's capacity to support the schools lessens dramatically. The OPI has been approved for an extension of SIG funding to a fourth year to support sustainability efforts, yet OPI staff know turning around a school that is struggling at the level in which these schools started will take more time and effort than the SIG program is structured to provide.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Daily work with the schools has given OPI staff a much keener understanding of the challenges and the opportunities that exist to help struggling schools succeed. The insight gained is allowing OPI to differentiate its school improvement efforts with SIG schools, keeping in mind existing capacities and supports. The experience is also informing OPI's approach to school improvement at the agency level, which will eventually benefit all schools in the state identified as in need of improvement.

Capacity building and sustainability have been central components of the work of SIG. Starting in the second year of SIG, the OPI embedded capacity building into its training, on-site support, and planning with local SIG teams, such as using an annual planning process through the District Action Plan. The job-embedded coaching strategy that OPI utilized is also geared to invest in the people who work at the schools and live in the community—supporting a broader vision and expression of what it means to be a successful school and equipping them with tools to use to get to that vision.

In addition, the OPI is collaborating with federally funded education-related programs like GEAR UP[1] and Jobs for Montana Graduates to share the strategies of SIG so that these programs can build on the work that SIG has begun.

[1]GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a federal program that works to increase students' college and career readiness through academic preparedness, postsecondary planning, and financial aid knowledge. Jobs for Montana Graduates is affiliated with Jobs For America's Graduates and assists students to stay in school, graduate, and successfully transition from school into employment, postsecondary education, other training or the military.

For instance, the OPI contracted with a Montana college to provide professional development to turnaround school administrators on issues such as budgeting, addressing tough issues head on, and developing a vision for school improvement. GEAR UP requires administrators to participate in ongoing professional development, and OPI is encouraging GEAR UP to build off of the curricula and approach the SIG funds helped to create.

Another initiative of Superintendent Juneau's is Graduation Matters Montana (GMM) which seeks to increase the number of Montana students who graduate from high school college and career ready. GMM is an innovative approach that incentivizes the development of local school–community–business partnerships to focus on current and promising strategies that will have a real impact on student success in Montana. OPI is incorporating its adoption of common core standards into its GMM work.

Since Juneau launched GMM in 2010, 33 communities have started a GMM initiative, representing 70% of Montana's high school students. While early signs indicate the approach is working (e.g., dropout rates are down, local businesses and community organizations are partnering with schools at an unprecedented rate), the graduation rates for American Indian students are not going up—they decreased slightly in the past year. The OPI is preparing to develop a series of strategies and interventions to support more American Indian students through high school graduation, and OPI staff are looking at the experiences of the SIG program to glean effective strategies to employ in this statewide effort.

Action Principles

Actively engage the chief state school officer in targeted turnaround efforts

- Personally visit schools and communities and commit state staff and agency resources to signal that change is required.
- Communicate clearly and consistently why turnaround is required and involve the local community in the creation of a vision that includes a sense of urgency needed for change.

Approach the work holistically and provide hands-on support

- Attend to the interconnecting systems that create a functioning school system—effective instruction, solid administrative decision-making and leadership, and an engaged, safe student culture.
- Provide on-site, side-by-side coaching support to customize professional development and to strengthen individual aspects of the system so they can work in greater harmony and efficacy.

Maintain focus on instructional supports

- Recognize that the teacher–student relationship is critical and work to introduce programs that directly or indirectly build positive, supportive school relationships.

- Assign adequate staff—such as an on-site Instructional Leader—to provide direct support as well as to help coordinate outside supports on how to use evaluation processes, the implementation of common core, and use of other levers to support a continuous improvement effort in instruction.

References

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The turnaround challenge*. Boston, MA: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/51/file/1/pubs/2010/04/15/TheTurnaroundChallenge_MainReport.pdf

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides

Building Leadership Capacity in Native American Schools: The Principal Leadership Academy

Pam Sheley

The Need for Change

On a warm fall day in November 2012, 30 principals and 8 mentors gathered for a three-day Basic Leadership Training in Albuquerque to launch the Principal Leadership Academy (PLA), a collaboration between the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and Academic Development Institute (ADI). The PLA is a 9-month long training and support initiative for principals. The PLA's mission is to improve the performance of schools by building principals' skills and practices. The BIE "oversees a total of 183 elementary, secondary, residential and peripheral dormitories across 23 states. 126 schools are tribally controlled under P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination Contracts or P. L. 100-297 Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act. 57 schools are operated by the Bureau of Indian Education" (Bureau of Indian Education website).[1] This cohort only included principals in BIE-operated schools. The principals in the BIE cohort all serve predominantly American Indian students. Some of the schools were identified as the lowest 5% and were receiving School Improvement Grant funds, and some schools had been in either school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring status for many years.

The BIE cohort included high school, elementary, and middle school principals. The schools in the cohort included dormitory as well as day schools. There were schools in heavily populated areas as well as a school located at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. School enrollment ranged from 110 students to 400 students. While all these factors are relevant, the bottom line—and the premise of PLA—is the same: All schools need good leadership, and that leadership starts

[1]http://www.bie.edu/

with the principal. The PLA was designed by ADI, in partnership with the BIE, to significantly bolster principals' leadership skills in order to support their efforts to markedly improve student outcomes. The program's web-based tools document principal actions, the work of the leadership team, a portfolio of projects, and mentor–principal interactions.

The need to build the skill sets of principals already serving in BIE schools—as opposed to principal replacement—is symptomatic of the difficulty these schools have typically experienced attracting and retaining highly qualified candidates for their leadership roles (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003). When no principal candidate is available, other staff members are "detailed" to fill an "acting" principal position. These staff members may be ill-prepared to step into the role of an instructional leader while also trying to organize and operate the day-to-day functions of the school (Levine, 2005; Young & Fox, 2002).

BIE schools suffer the same challenges as other rural schools in which the population is impoverished in resources, supports, organizations, or other educational institutions that may be available in more urban areas (see Redding & Walberg in this book; see also Johnson & Strange, 2007; Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008; Monk, 2007). While these issues are not unique in rural schools, BIE schools face additional challenges. For instance, many BIE schools are located in very isolated rural areas, and policies governing Native American Reservations (e.g., limitations regarding who is permitted to own property) can make it difficult to attract or retain personnel who would like to settle in the community long-term. Schools may also have a Native preference stipulation attached to hiring principals and teachers in their schools. Consequently, for most BIE-operated schools, hiring new teachers or principals is extremely difficult. Whereas other communities may have access to a labor pool to replace staff, it is imperative for BIE schools to focus on improving the capacity and performance of their existing staff (Barley, 2009; Idaho Rural Education Task Force, 2008; McCullough & Johnson, 2007). All of these factors contribute to the need for BIE schools to invest in the principals they have and raise their skill levels to support the schools they are serving.

Topics and Components of PLA

To strategically tackle raising the skill sets of all principals while taking into account that every principal begins the PLA with varying levels of skills already present, the PLA centered around four major topics and utilized four key components. The major topics were (a) Setting the Direction of Change: Rapid Improvement Leader Plan; (b) Managing Change: Leadership and Decision Making; (c) Engaging People: Culture and Language Project;[2] and (d) Instruction: Seeing Change Through to the Classroom. Cutting across all four topics were these key

[2]A culture and language project was selected because of the significance and relevance to BIE schools. The topic of Engaging People could be centered around any number of topics relevant to the SEA/LEA/organization using the PLA.

components of the PLA: mentoring, site visits, leadership teams, and a rapid improvement leader plan.

Mentoring

The PLA leadership team designed the program to take principals through nine months of intensive work to receive certification as a rapid improvement leader. Principals who meet the program's rigorous requirements will be awarded a certificate from Temple University. Each principal was paired with a mentor who supported the principal through the nine months. Bhatt and Behrstock (2010) identified seven factors to address when hiring and retaining qualified and effective staff. These include: preparation, recruitment and hiring, induction and *mentoring*, professional development, compensations and other financial incentives, working conditions, and performance management. In the most common scenario, however, principals go through preservice preparation programs to learn a set of skills and knowledge that research demonstrates they should have to effectively lead a school. Their continuing professional development is left to their own discretion with the assumption that they will seek out the appropriate training opportunities to continue to develop and refine their skills. However, what is missing in the equation is the complexity of individual and very different educational environments (Zellner et al., 2002). Schools serving American Indian students on remote reservations are unique on two fronts—the students they serve and the governance context in which they operate. The PLA mentors are principals and administrators selected by the BIE for their demonstrated leadership in BIE schools. Therefore, the mentors are very familiar with the settings and circumstances the BIE principals face in their own schools.

Leadership mentoring can foster reciprocal learning as well as develop collegial relationships. Principals and administrators are able to work with veteran practitioners in their own schools; they can observe leadership in action, and they can develop a deeper understanding of their own professional expectations (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001, 2004, 2006; Heck, 1995; Parkay & Hall, 1992). Mentoring enhances role-identity transformation, provides concurrent professional development both for the mentor and the principal, and expands leadership capacity throughout the organization (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991; Mullen & Lick, 1999).

Effective mentors provide professional feedback, role clarification, and socialization while lessening the sense of isolation that can be a byproduct of the role of leadership (Daresh, 2001). Principals can often feel caught between the needs of students, teachers, and district offices. Mentors become someone the principal can openly talk to about what he or she experiences and receive feedback and guidance. Mentorship is also an opportunity to provide customized, individualized, and embedded professional development (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Crow and Matthews (1998) found that principals cited mentors as their primary

source of assistance in becoming successful school leaders. Well-designed, properly implemented, and adequately monitored mentoring programs can lead to principals having more confidence in their professional competence, more effectively translating educational theory into practice, developing improved communication skills, and feeling more comfortable in their leadership role (Daresh, 2004). All of this leads to increased job satisfaction and retaining effective leaders.

The PLA provided structures for the mentors to be in constant communication with their principals. Through a custom-designed online system developed by ADI, the mentor and principal interacted; the mentor could view the work and progress of the principal; and the principal could review comments entered by the mentor relating to the work the principal had entered. Within the scope of the PLA, the principal was assigned tasks under each of the four major topics (setting direction, managing change, engaging people, and improving instruction). Principals were required to create two projects: a Culture and Language project to address engaging people and a roll out of the Common Core to improve instruction. They also developed plans with their school leadership teams using indicators of effective practice to improve leadership skills, teaming, and the instruction practices in their schools. Principals recorded their work via online systems; mentors reviewed the work via the online systems and were able to enter comments related to the quality and scope of the plans and projects. Mentors also met with their principals monthly via a webinar to discuss progress and address any challenges or celebrate successes. Mentors were the glue that held everything together, kept the principals on track, and provided support and guidance for the principals.

Site Visits

The second key component of the PLA was the two-day site visit. Principals were asked to arrange for the mentor to visit classrooms and meet with parents, tribal councils, school boards, and teachers. Mentors used a protocol to guide meetings and an observation form for each classroom visit. For the principals, the site visit was an opportunity to have the mentors walk in their shoes for a day—a chance to show off their schools and their staff. For the mentors, it was a chance to see the challenges and triumphs of their principals first hand, get to know the communities in which the schools reside, and meet the students and the staff. PLA participants identified the site visits as a rewarding experience for both principals and mentors. Based on the findings from the site-visits, mentors and principals collaboratively developed an action plan, keyed to the program's components, for moving the principal and school forward.

Leadership Teams

The third key component of the PLA was the work the principals did with their school leadership teams, guided by BIE's Native Star[3] online improvement system. Principals cannot change a school alone. The work of the leadership team was guided by a set of indicators of effective practices and nested within a culture of candor. The role of the principal as the captain of the ship was to be open and honest with the staff—to celebrate those practices that the school does well and to target those practices which needed shoring up. To be an instructional leader, the principal was expected to spend 50% of his or her time working with the staff on instructional practices. The leadership team assessed the school on the indicators of effective practice and then set a plan in motion to improve. The principal was responsible for ensuring the work progressed and that the plan supported improved outcomes for students. The principals in the PLA were required to assess indicators centered on leadership and decision making and instruction, create plans for the indicators, and implement the indicators with high quality.

Rapid Improvement Leader Plan

The final key component of the PLA was the work principals did individually, with the guidance of the mentors, on their personal leadership practices. This work was guided by a set of 14 indicators drawn from *School Turnarounds: Actions and Results* (Brinson, Kowal, & Hassel, 2008). *School Turnarounds* analyzed the habits of highly effective turnaround leaders and grouped these actions into four major areas: analysis and problem solving, driving for results, influencing stakeholders, and measuring and reporting improvement. For the PLA, the principal developed a personal plan based on the 14 indicators for turnaround leadership and implemented the plan throughout the project.

The Wrap Up

The PLA was structured to give principals a heavy dose of information right at the beginning in a three-day Basic Leadership Training. Mentors arrived two days before the principal to get an overview of the content and to become familiar with the online project management tool. Principals came for three days of intensive training. When the principals left after the three days, they had their assignments—work on indicators of effective practice with their leadership teams, plan a site visit with their mentors, design and implement a Culture and Language project, design and implement a project around the Common Core, and work on a set of indicators of effective practice for rapid improvement leaders.

[3]Native Star is the BIE's custom-developed version of Indistar®, ADI's web-based school improvement platform based on indicators of effective practice. Within PLA, principals worked on Leadership and Decision-making indicators and Instructional indicators with their leadership teams. As individuals, principals were required to create personal plans in the Rapid Improvement Leader indicators, all housed within the Indistar® platform.

The PLA design then required principals and mentors to come back together mid-year for two days to reenergize and refocus efforts that can begin to go adrift when principals get back in the trenches of their daily work in their schools. This is not unique to American Indian schools; efforts to change schools can often be derailed when insufficient attention is given to managing the change. Heath and Heath (2010) comment on this drift:

> Many leaders pride themselves on setting high-level direction: I'll set the vision and stay out of the details. It's true that a compelling vision is critical. But it's not enough. Big-picture, hands-off leadership isn't likely to work in a change situation, because the hardest part of change—the paralyzing part—is precisely in the details. (p. 53)

In order for the principals to carry through with implementing changes required to be a rapid improvement leader in their schools, they had to stay focused on the details of school improvement. The PLA was carefully structured to give training in the beginning, a boost in the middle, structured activities, and mentoring throughout the process to keep principals focused.

The final entries have been made in the PLA project management system, and portfolios of the principals' work are being created for a final review to determine those principals who were able to not just cross the finish line, but were able to document clear evidence that their schools were changing. Comments about the PLA submitted in the system were encouraging. One principal wrote, "One of the things that I enjoy and appreciate the most is our [mentor and principal] discussions that we have about the situations that each of us go through at our schools. I feel that with [my mentor's] experience and knowledge that he truly understands what I deal with at the school level. I've learned not only from the PLA but also from the knowledge and experience of [my mentor]." Another principal commented that "it has been pointed out that there are other groups of stakeholders I need to include in this change process. I tend to get so tied up working with the staff that I forget to involve parents and community." One principal commented on the need to develop his leadership skills in light of the school's recent history:

> My leadership skills need to improve before others can reach their…potential. Due to the fragmented leadership that has been in place…for the last ten years or so…those in the leadership roles have created a survival attitude. Each has done what they felt is the correct thing to do for the department they oversee. Within each of these strands are personnel that are insecure of the needed changes to reach our potential. Building a professional attitude that delivers the best in education will require that I create a collaborative attitude within this team.

Lessons Learned for Future Cohorts

At the conclusion of the first cohort of the PLA, clear lessons emerged. The original structure of the PLA was to include three face-to-face meetings: a Basic Leadership Training, Mid-Year Training, and a Summative Meeting. Each meeting had a specific purpose—Basic Leadership Training was to introduce as much information as needed to get principals started; Mid-Year Training was to revive and encourage principals to stay the course; and the Summative Meeting was to celebration and provide a chance for principals to present their projects and receive certification. Due to sequestration, the travel budget for the BIE was essentially eliminated. Consequently, the Mid-Year Training was cancelled, and the Summative Meeting was held via webinars for principals to present their projects. Also, a few mentors were not able to conduct a site visit for their principals as planned (prior to the Mid-Year Training), so those principals received an abbreviated site-visit by someone other than their mentor at the conclusion of the PLA due to the travel restrictions. While still of some value, the timing of the site visit and not having it carried out by the mentor negated most of the intended value of the site visit. These cuts significantly changed the structure and scope of the PLA and reflect a practical reality that has historically undermined many change efforts; competition for time and resources. That being said, the principals who completed the PLA and made it to the finish line found value in the process, as stated by one principal,

> The Principal Leadership Academy experience has helped my leadership at the school level be more focused. The PLA reinforced the ideas that I had been implementing and provided support for my plans moving forward. I was able to focus on setting directions, managing changes, and engaging people while improving instruction. The PLA has allowed me to continue to lead for change with confidence.

Another principal said: "As a leader I have been more open to suggestions, I have learned to delegate more. Through the delegating of tasks I have learned that team members like to feel that they are contributing in a positive way." For another principal, she realized the value of change:

> For many years, my job has felt like a juggler with 10 plates that are thrown into the air, and each one caught just before it crashes to the floor. I pick it up, and throw it really high so I have time to catch the next plate before it crashes to the floor.…Changing one area always impacts other areas of the school, and making changes for improvement is constant. A school that stays static cannot improve, and can't even stay on the same level. Change is essential, and managing that change is an essential part of a Principal's job.

References

Barley, Z. A. (2009). Preparing teachers for rural appointments: Lessons from the mid-continent. *The Rural Educator, 30*(3), 10–15.

Bhatt, M. P., & Behrstock-Sherratt, E. (2010, September). *Managing educator talent: Promising practices and lessons from Midwestern states*. Retrieved from http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/MET_Promising_Practices_Regional.pdf

Brinson, D., Kowal, J. & Hassel, B. (2008). *School turnarounds: Actions and results*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute.

Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2004). Principals Excellence Program: Developing effective school leaders through unique university-district partnership. *Education Leadership Review, 5*(2), 24–36.

Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Allen, L. W. (2006, February 10). Preparing principals for high-need rural schools: A central office perspective about collaborative efforts to transform school leadership. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 21*(1). Retrieved from http://www.umaine.edu/jrre/21-1.htm

Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Muth, R. (2001a, November). *Becoming a principal: Role transformation through clinical practice*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Cincinnati, OH. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED465225)

Crow, G. M., & Matthews, L. J. (1998). *Finding one's way: How mentoring can lead to dynamic leadership*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C. (2001). *Leaders helping leaders: A practical guide to administrative mentoring* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C. (2004). Mentoring school leaders: Professional promise or predictable problems? *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*, 495–517.

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2010). *Switch: How to change when change is hard*. New York, NY: Random House.

Heck, R. H. (1995). Organizational and professional socialization: Its impact on the performance of new administrators. *The Urban Review, 27*(1), 31–49.

Idaho Rural Education Task Force. (2008). *Idaho's rural education initiative: A report to the Idaho legislature*, January, 2008. Boise, ID: Idaho State Department of Education.

Johnson, J., & Strange, M. (2007, October). *Why rural matters 2007: The realities of rural education growth*. Arlington, VA: The Rural School and Community Trust.

Knapp, M., Copeland, M., & Talbert, J. E. (2003). *Leading for learning: Reflective tools for school and district leaders*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.

Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school leaders*. Retrieved from http://www.edschools.org/pdf/Final313.pdf

Mackety, D. M., & Linder-VanBerschot, J. A. (2008, August). *Examining American Indian perspectives in the Central Region on parent involvement in children's education.* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2008-No. 059). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Central.

McCullough, P., & Johnson, J. (2007). *Quality teachers: Issues, challenges, and solutions for North Carolina's most overlooked rural communities*. Arlington, VA: The Rural School and Community Trust.

Milstein, M. M., Bobroff, B. M., & Restine, L. N. (1991). *Internship programs in educational administration: A guide to preparing educational leaders*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Monk, D. (2007, Spring). Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas. *Future of Children, 17*(1), 155–174.

Mullen, C. A., & Lick, D. W. (Eds.). (1999). *New directions in mentoring: Creating a culture of synergy.* London, UK: Falmer Press.

Parkay, F. W., & Hall, G. E. (Eds.). (1992). *Becoming a principal: The challenges of beginning leadership*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Young, I. P., & Fox, J. A. (2002, October). Asian, Hispanic, and Native American job candidates: Prescreened or screened within the selection process. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(4), 530–554.

Zellner, L., Ward, S. M., McNamara, P., Gideon, B., Camacho, S., & Edgewood, S. D. (2002). *The loneliest job in town: Sculpting the recruitment and retention of the principal.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, Austin, TX.

Authors' Biographies

Daniel Aladjem has over ten years of experience leading large-scale, mixed-methods studies focused on school improvement, especially whole school reform and school turnaround. He directed the National Longitudinal Evaluation of Comprehensive School Reform, an Institute of Education Sciences-funded, large-scale study of the implementation and outcomes of comprehensive school reform. He currently leads an evaluation of the University of California Office of the President's college readiness and access partnership program. Aladjem earned his PhD in public policy/public administration from the University of Southern California and holds a BA in history and MA in education/secondary teaching from Stanford University. Aladjem began his career in education as a high school teacher.

Mandy Smoker Broaddus is the School Transformation Director for the Montana Office of Public Instruction. She is an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux tribes in north eastern Montana. Before coming to OPI in 2005, Mandy worked as a Principal and Dean of Students in her home community of Frazer, Montana, a rural K–12 school district with a 100% American Indian population.

C.C. Clark is a talent management consultant, working with organizations to consider their staffing and development needs over the long term and act with purpose to meet them. She has worked with corporations and nonprofits for many years and began focusing much of her work in education over the last several years. She has worked with school districts and education nonprofits across the country and is very humbled by the work being done by many educators. C.C.'s work is behind the scenes and designed to optimize the use of talent so that every child can have great learning opportunities. Specifically, she helps districts consider their talent needs and determine where to find candidates; conducts and trains others to conduct and analyze structured interviews; helps districts assess how to best deploy their principals; advises on the creation of new organizational structures; and maps out change strategies for rolling out new initiatives or organizational structures. C.C. holds a PhD in industrial and organizational psychology from Pennsylvania State University.

Justin C. Cohen is president of the Mass Insight Education School Turnaround Group (STG). Mass Insight Education works with state education agencies, school districts, and partner organizations to develop the organizational strategies and capacity necessary to turnaround our nation's lowest performing schools. Prior to launching the STG, Justin was director of the office of portfolio management and senior advisor to the Chancellor at the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). While at DCPS, Justin led the district's work in creating long-term strategies for fostering quality, innovation, and growth in the schools portfolio. His office managed a diverse selection of school reform models, and upon his departure, almost half of the district's schools had adopted at least

one of those models. Before that, Justin was director of industry support and development for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and spent time at Edison Schools. Justin has served on the national boards of the Yale Alumni Fund and Students for Education Reform, and he is a trustee of the Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools in Washington, DC. His writing on school turnaround has appeared in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* and the NationalJournal.com. Justin has a BA in cognitive science from Yale.

Julie Corbett, President and Founder of Corbett Education Consulting LLC, specializes in school and district education reform and works with clients throughout the country. She works with school management organizations, school districts, state education agencies, and nonprofit organizations on a variety of turnaround-related projects. She is the author of several publications, is part of USED's Race to the Top Reform Support Network, is a member of the Center on School Turnaround's Scientific Council, and was a peer reviewer for USED's Race to the Top—District competition. Before founding her own company, Ms. Corbett was a Program Manager in Mass Insight Education's School Turnaround Group. Previously, she was a Research Assistant with The Rodel Foundation of Delaware and assisted with the Vision 2015 education reform. Ms. Corbett also completed one year of service with Americorps VISTA (Delaware Mentoring Council), where she led the creation of a Governor's Executive Order in support of state employee youth mentoring. Ms. Corbett is a Senior Fellow in the Institute for Educational Leadership's Global Education Policy Fellowship Program (IEL-GEPFP) and was a Fellow in Northeastern University's 2008 EPFP cohort. She has an MPA from the University of Delaware and a BA from Denison University.

Julie Duffield is a Senior Research Associate at WestEd. She works on federal and state school improvement projects as a member of the Comprehensive School Assistance Program. She manages SchoolsMovingUp, WestEd's award-winning school improvement initiative that helps schools and districts address the challenge of raising student achievement in low-performing schools. Duffield also collaborates with multiple stakeholders as part of the School Turnaround Learning Community and the Center on School Turnaround. One of her key roles is supporting educators in building and sharing their knowledge of implementation practices by convening both virtually and in person. Duffield brings over 30 years of experience both in and out of the classroom, including working with technology in education. Duffield has been an early adopter of using technology to support educator learning, engagement, and communities of practice. She has also worked on state and federal initiatives, such as WestEd's Distance Learning Resource, applying technology to support diverse learners. Duffield received a BA in psychology from the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, a teaching diploma from Kedron College, Brisbane, Australia, and a technology in education certificate from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Dr. Ken Futernick began his career as an elementary school teacher near Sacramento and received an MA and PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. Futernick is currently the director of WestEd's School Turnaround Center (not to be confused with the Center on School Turnaround), which provides direct assistance to schools and districts. The Center also shares knowledge and recommendations on school turnaround strategy and policy with state and federal policymakers. Prior to joining WestEd, Futernick chaired the department of teacher education and was a member of the faculty at California State University, Sacramento for 20 years. Futernick served as Director of the Center for Teacher Quality at California State University's Chancellor's Office where he conducted a study titled, A Possible Dream: Retaining California Teachers So All Students Learn. In 2012, Futernick co-authored a report titled, *Forward Together: Better Schools Through Labor-Management Collaboration* and is the lead author of a soon-to-be-released publication titled, *Labor Management Collaboration in Education—An Analysis of Research*. In 2010, he published an article in *Kappan* titled, *Incompetent Teachers of Dysfunctional Systems?* Futernick has testified on numerous occasions before California state assembly and senate committees on issues pertaining to teacher quality, teacher retention, and school reform. He presents frequently on these subjects to teachers, administrators, and education officials.

Sylvie Hale is Director of Special Projects for WestEd's Comprehensive School Assistance Program, overseeing the development of strategic planning processes with focus on incorporating innovative technology services. She combines deep knowledge of school and district improvement with experience in applying technology to complex educational issues. She is currently working on several projects that integrate online tools with school and district improvement activities. Previously with WestEd, Hale was Director of WestEd Interactive, managing web-based and multimedia technologies that provided clients with solutions to complex data and information management needs. Hale was an original developer of SchoolsMovingUp, an initiative that helps schools and districts address the immense challenge of raising student achievement in low-performing schools. Hale has also provided technical assistance to numerous struggling schools. These services included workshop series on data analysis, reform planning, and implementation. Hale has worked closely on school reform with federal, state, county, and district staff through consultations, collaborative projects, and planning activities. Prior to joining WestEd in 1988, Hale worked as a Mathematics Content Area Specialist at Dominican College Learning Center. She received an MA in international educational administrative policy analysis from Stanford University and a BA in international relations with an emphasis in cross-cultural communication.

Deborah Halliday is the Community Learning Partnerships Policy Advisor to the Montana State Superintendent. As a policy advisor to the State

Superintendent of the Montana Office of Public Instruction, her work includes launching Graduation Matters Montana, a unique public–private partnership that seeks to increase the number of Montana students who graduate from high school, and Montana Schools of Promise, which is working to dramatically improve the state's most struggling schools. Ms. Halliday is a graduate of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs' Master's program in Public Administration, where she focused on Social Welfare Policy, and she has over 20 years of experience working with local, state, and national organizations on social welfare policy initiatives.

Dr. Susan Hanes has extensive experience in public education, including information management services, assessment development, research, program evaluation, and high school mathematics teaching. Her experience includes 12 years in the Georgia Department of Education in assessment development, director of statistical services and electronic data collection for statewide systems, and program evaluation. She has worked in local school systems as the director of assessment, research and evaluation. She was the Director of Standards and Research for the Georgia Office of Education Accountability. She has conducted consulting services for the IES Longitudinal Data System Grants, technical assistance for the Performance Based Data Management Initiative (PBDMI), and consulting services and site visits with the Center for Education Leadership and Technology and CCSSO for the Decision Support Architecture Consortium. She is a consultant with the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center where she works with states on their statewide systems of support. She has served as a peer reviewer for the U.S. Department of Education for Accountability Reviews and State Assessment System reviews since 1999 and has been a member of Title I State Monitoring teams. She served as a reviewer for the U.S. Department of Education for the flexibility requests. She has worked on committees for the CCSSO and National Center for Education Statistics including Chair, Implementation Task Force—National Forum for Education Statistics, 1990–1991; Task Force on Confidentiality, National Center for Education Statistics— Member, 1994–95; and Chair, Education Information Advisory Committee for the Council of Chief State School Officers, 1994–1995.

Denise Juneau, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, began her second term as Superintendent on January 7, 2013. Under her tenure, test scores are up and dropout rates are down. Her initiative, Graduation Matters Montana, has schools and communities working together to implement locally developed plans to keep more students in school. Additionally, the state has raised standards in English and Math and is providing more opportunities for students to access higher education. Denise is the first American Indian woman to serve in a statewide elected office in the nation's history. She graduated from Browning High School in Browning, Montana. She earned her Bachelor's degree in English from Montana State University, her Masters of Education degree from the Harvard

Graduate School of Education, and her Juris Doctorate from the University of Montana.

Michael Kight is the senior project director for the Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education. Prior to joining the PLE, Michael served as the principal of a high-performing urban middle school in the city of Richmond, Virginia for seven years. Under his leadership, student test scores increased from the 50th percentile to the 93rd percentile in English, mathematics, science, and history. In 2009, Michael was awarded the R.E.B. Award for Distinguished Educational Leadership for Richmond City Schools. In 2011, he was one of only two principals in the City of Richmond who earned the Level II Principal of Distinction Endorsement from the Virginia Department of Education for improving student achievement, displaying effective instructional leadership, and creating a positive effect on school climate and culture in a Virginia public school. Michael received his BS in elementary and middle education from West Virginia University and his MEd in education administration and supervision from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Robert Linquanti is Project Director for English Learner Evaluation & Accountability Support and Senior Researcher at WestEd's California Comprehensive Center. He helps states and school districts review and strengthen their assessment, evaluation, and accountability policies, practices, and systems for English learners (ELs). He recently co-authored a study to define and measure EL linguistic and academic progress as part of the U.S. Department of Education's national Title III evaluation and is coauthoring guidance for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to assist states in federally funded assessment consortia to move toward a common definition of English learner. He has published and presented widely on evaluating EL education policies, EL assessment and reclassification, and improving accountability and equity for ELs. Linquanti currently serves on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium EL Advisory Committee, the CCSSO ELL Assessment Advisory Committee, the Texas State Assessment Technical Advisory Committee; Stanford University's Understanding Language Initiative, and the national Working Group on ELL Policy. He regularly advises the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Congressional staff, and CCSSO on assessment and accountability policy and practices related to ELs. Linquanti has also taught as invited faculty at the Aspen Institute and Stanford University.

Sally Partridge serves as the Associate Commissioner for Accreditation and School Improvement at the Texas Education Agency. Her current focus is on providing tools and resources to assist districts in supporting school turnaround initiatives, and promoting the continued development of a quality charter community in Texas. Her experience includes facilitating the development of the Texas Accountability Intervention system to emphasize the vital role of the district in the continuous improvement process, developing interventions to meet state

and federal improvement statues, and integrating monitoring and compliance requirements into a cohesive approach to improving student learning. Specialized areas of focus include the development of a statewide Educator Pipeline, the launch of a District Turnaround Leadership Initiative, and the implementation of the Charter School Technical Assistance Network.

Carole L. Perlman, a consultant to the Academic Development Institute, has participated in ADI's work with the NCLB Center on Innovation & Improvement, the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center, and the Illinois Center for School Improvement. She served as School Improvement Coordinator for the Chicago Public Schools from 2003 to 2006. Prior to that, she directed student assessment programs for the Chicago Public Schools for 20 years. A past president of the National Association of Test Directors, and past board member of the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), Dr. Perlman also served on the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) National Advisory Board and represented NCME for two terms on the Joint Committee on Testing Practices. She has served on numerous state and federal advisory panels, including the NAEP Reading Framework Steering Committee, the first NAEP Mathematics Standard-Setting Panel, the Education Information Advisory Committee's Assessment Task Force, and the Voluntary National Test Technical Advisory Committee. She co-edited the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* and co-wrote the *Toolkit for Implementing the School Improvement Grant: Transformation Model*. Dr. Perlman has been a frequent presenter at professional conferences and is the recipient of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Division D Research Report Award, AERA Division H Outstanding Publication Award, National Association of Test Directors Career Award for Outstanding Contributions to Educational Assessment, and the UIC College of Education's Distinguished Alumna Award. She holds a BS in Mathematics with honors from the University of Illinois at Chicago, an MS in Statistics from the University if Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a PhD in Public Policy Analysis from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Daniel Player (PhD, Economics, University of Washington) is a research assistant professor at the Curry School of Education and is affiliated with the Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education at the University of Virginia. His research focuses on district readiness to support school turnaround, school leader career paths, and the distribution of teacher quality. Prior to joining UVa, Dr. Player was a Senior Researcher at Mathematica Policy Research where he worked on several large-scale evaluations of education interventions for the U.S. Department of Education, including a study of teacher preparation programs, a study of teachers from highly selective routes to alternative certification, an evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund, and an evaluation of Teacher Residency Programs. Dr. Player publishes in peer-reviewed journals such as *Economics of*

Education Review, *Education Finance and Policy*, and the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

Eileen Reed specializes in large-scale improvement and school turnaround initiatives. Her areas of expertise include technical assistance for multidistrict and regional school turnaround initiatives, district readiness assessment for change, district site visits related to district support for campus turnaround, and select professional development. Dr. Reed's recent consulting experience includes a FL DOE Race to the Top Grant to develop a statewide cadre of turnaround leaders as well as continued work with the acclaimed University of Virginia's School Turnaround Specialist Program. Dr. Reed served as the Deputy Executive Director of Texas Initiatives at Education Service Center (ESC) Region 13. In this role she directed statewide projects administered in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency. Primary projects included assistance to districts in meeting the accountability requirements of state and federal programs, developing the capacity of the system of ESCs to support low-performing schools, high school redesign programs, and initiatives focused on supporting the state's efforts to graduate all students career and college ready. Specialized areas of focus included the design, implementation, and oversight of the state intervention and support system for schools in improvement under NCLB and the establishment of a state turnaround center to support the state's efforts to improve the performance of schools and districts in improvement under the state accountability system.

Sam Redding is the executive director of Academic Development Institute, associate director of the Center on School Turnaround, senior learning specialist for the Center on Innovations in Learning, and a consultant to the Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center. A former high school teacher and college dean, Dr. Redding has published in the areas of statewide systems of support, school improvement, change leadership, innovations in education, and family and community engagement.

Lauren Morando Rhim is president of LMR Consulting, an education policy, research, and evaluation consulting firm dedicated to leveraging research to inform practice in K–12 education. She consults with state departments of education, school districts, and nonprofits committed to creating high-quality public schools for all students and is affiliated with the Academic Development Institute and a strategic partner of the Center on School Turnaround. Rhim is the Vice Chairperson of her school board in Norwich, Vermont and the Chairperson of the Ledyard Charter School in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

William Robinson is the Interim Executive Director of the University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE) where he is responsible for strategic direction, thought leadership, program delivery, business development, program results, and financial performance. In previous roles, Robinson led redesign and implementation of PLE's external support to

districts, served as primary consultant to 20 districts leading turnaround efforts, and oversaw PLE's financial strategy. Robinson is a graduate of Harvard Business School and earned his BA in Economics from Princeton University. Prior to joining the Darden/Curry Partnership, he completed consulting work for various education organizations including the DC Public Education Fund, the Center for Better Schools, and Stand for Children. Robinson began his career at McMaster-Carr Supply Company, where he helped manage its supply chain operations in Atlanta.

Alison Segal is a project coordinator at the Mass Insight Education School Turnaround Group (STG), where she supports the State Development Network, Mass Insight Education communications and strategy, and research projects. Prior to joining the STG, Alison worked as a preschool teacher outside of Boston, MA, and worked at Rhode Island Kids Count and the Rhode Island State House Legislative Research Council, focusing on education policy. In graduate school, she collaborated with other Master's students to create a business plan to spur social and entrepreneurial development in Appalachian Kentucky, examined the feasibility of introducing Social Impact Bonds in Rhode Island, and worked as a Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Kenneth Wong. Alison has a BA in Human Development & Family Studies from UConn and a Master of Public Policy from Brown University.

Pam Sheley is the vice president of business and client services for the Academic Development Institute. For the past four years, she has been the liaison to the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) for services provided through the federal Center system as well as the online Indistar application (called Native Star for the BIE). She was the project manager for the Principal Leadership Academy. Pam earned her BS in Psychology and her MA in English.

Kelly Stuart is the Director of Dissemination for Developmental Studies Center (DSC), a nonprofit organization based in Oakland, California. Stuart facilitates the national efforts to bring DSC's in-school and afterschool programs to over 100,000 students annually. From 2010 to 2013, Stuart worked as a Senior Research Associate at WestEd. Stuart led dissemination efforts for Doing What Works (DWW) and led the School Turnaround Learning Community (STLC). Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the STLC is an online community for states, districts, and schools involved in turnaround efforts. She facilitated and supported state-level peer-to-peer meetings that enabled state departments overseeing School Improvement Grants to share promising practices and coordinate planning activities to better support their districts. Before working at Developmental Studies Center and WestEd, Stuart was the Director of Special Programs and Area Manager at the Success for All Foundation, overseeing program implementation in over 120 schools in California and Hawaii. Stuart began her career as an elementary school teacher. Stuart received a BS from the University of the State of New York at Albany; an MA, EdD, and administrative credential

from San Francisco State University; and a teaching credential from Simpson College.

Janet S. Twyman, PhD, BCBA, is a noted proponent of effective instructional practices. She is committed to evidence-based instruction and has a strong record in the transfer of instructional technology and developing web-based programs for wide-scale distribution. A career educator, she has been a preschool and elementary school teacher, a principal and administrator, and university professor. She has worked directly with typically developing students, preschoolers with intellectual disabilities, young adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems, and learners with autism spectrum disorders. As Vice President of Instructional Development, Implementation, and Research at Headsprout, she led the design, development, and dissemination of the company's highly regarded online educational programs and oversaw program implementation in over 1,000 public and private schools. Dr. Twyman has served on the boards of numerous organizations including the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies (where she chaired the Education Group) and PEER International (assisting township schools in Port Elizabeth, South Africa). In 2007–2008 she served as President of the Association for Behavior Analysis International. As Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, she focuses her time on evidence-based innovations in education and the systems that support them to produce meaningful differences in learners' lives. Dr. Twyman also recently became the Director of Innovation & Technology for the U.S. Dept. of Education's national Center on Innovations in Learning.

Dr. Adam Urbanski is the president of Rochester (NY) Teachers Association and a vice-president of the American Federation of Teachers. A native of Poland, he immigrated to the United States in 1960 at the age of 14. He earned his PhD in American Social History from the University of Rochester. A former high school teacher and college professor, Dr. Urbanski is an active proponent of change in education. In Rochester, he proposed and designed an internship program for new teachers; a peer review intervention plan; a career ladder; and a homework hotline service for students. Dr. Urbanski is the founding director of the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN) aimed at creating a new vision of teachers' unions that supports needed changes in education. Dr. Urbanski has appeared on several nationally broadcast television programs, including the NBC Today Show, ABC News World Report, CBS Newswatch, and PBS MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour. His most recent publication, *Improving Student Learning Through Collective Bargaining*, appeared in the May/June issue of the *Harvard Education Letter*.

Herb Walberg is Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. He formerly taught at Harvard University and is Emeritus University Scholar and Professor of Education and Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He was awarded a PhD from the University of Chicago, where he is a member of the Fellows Society. He has written or edited more than

55 books and written about 300 articles on such topics as educational effectiveness and exceptional human accomplishments. Among his recent books are the *International Encyclopedia of Educational Evaluation*; *Narrowing the Achievement Gap*: *Strategies for Educating Latino, Black, and Asian Students* (with Susan Paik); and *Testing Student Learning—Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness and School Accountability* (both with Williamson M. Evers).

Dennis Woodruff is founder and president of ClearView Consulting Company, focused on bringing excellent talent management practice to public education. Dennis's expertise is in leadership assessment and organizational development. ClearView Consulting has assessed hundreds of school administrators in the last three years, in over 15 states. Before starting ClearView Consulting in 2010, Dennis worked for Hay Group for 17 years as a managing consultant in Leadership Development and Talent Management. At Hay Group, Dennis led consulting engagements with several high profile clients, including CNH Global, IBM, Novelis, and BAE Systems. Dennis received his MA in Organizational Psychology from the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.

http://centeronschoolturnaround.org/