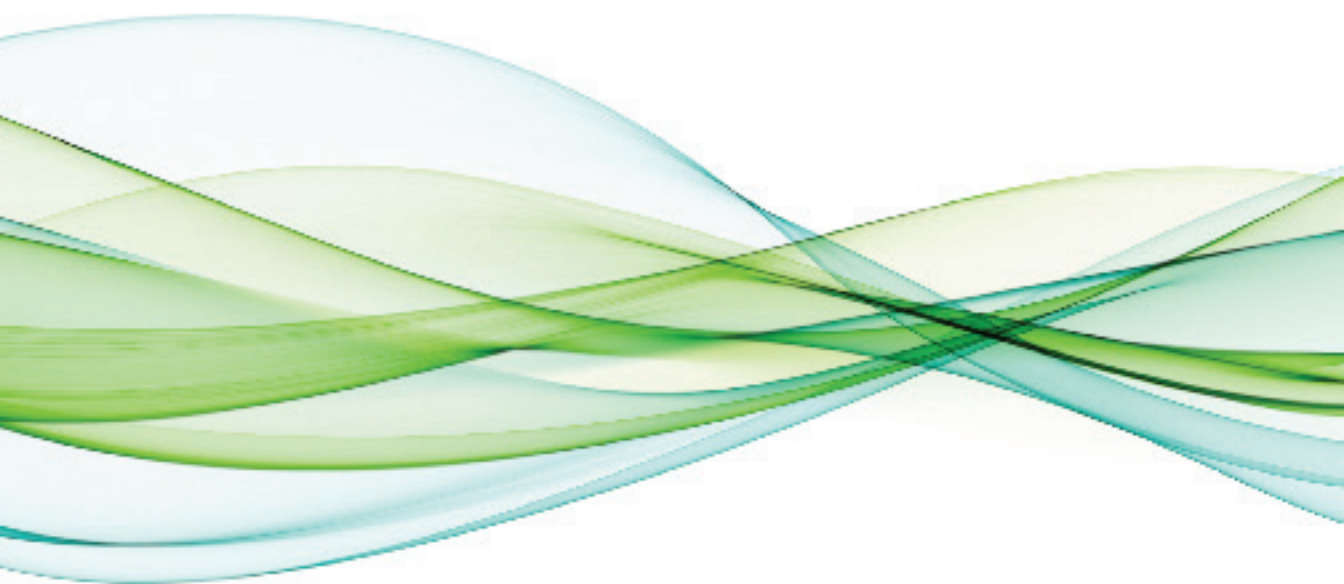# Lead Turnaround Partners

How the Emerging Marketplace of Lead Turnaround Partners is Changing School Improvement

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Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement helps regional comprehensive centers in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement is administered by the Academic Development Institute (Lincoln, IL) in partnership with the Temple University Institute for Schools and Society (Philadelphia, PA), Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies at Boise State University (Boise, ID), and Little Planet Learning (Nashville, TN).

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Executive Summary

This report describes the use of Lead Turnaround Partners (LTPs) in the current School Improvement Grant (SIG) program and provides the results of document review, surveys, and interviews with eight State Education Agencies and seven Lead Turnaround Partner organizations. The study focuses on the implementation of the transformation and turnaround models under the SIG program during the 2010-2011 school year. The current marketplace of Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) providers and the organizational structures of existing LTPs are explored. In addition, the communication strategies and the roles of various players involved in aspects of SIG implementation, including State Education Agencies (SEAs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and LTPs are discussed. Lessons learned and recommendations for improvement for each entity are summarized.

Document review, surveys, and interviews were gathered/conducted from/ with the following states:

- Colorado
- Massachusetts
- Hawaii
- New York
- Illinois
- Tennessee
- Indiana
- Virginia

Document review, surveys, and interviews were gathered/conducted from/ with the following LTPs:

- Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL)
- Learning Point Associates/AIR
- America's Choice
- Pearson School Achievement Services
- Cambridge Education
- WestED
- EdisonLearning

Based on the lessons learned, as articulated by the interviewees and substantiated by the author's research, the following recommendations are put forth:

Recommendations for States

1. Be flexible and understand that despite the best intentions, the state role or state-initiated processes might need to change throughout the improvement process.

2. Clearly define roles, responsibilities, requirements, and expectations early on in the process.

3. Shift the state role from one of compliance only to one of support and compliance.

4. Maintain regular contact with the LTPs and the districts and address concerns as they arise. Hold the districts accountable for their actions (i.e., ensure that districts create the conditions that allow the LTP to make the necessary changes).

Recommendations for Districts

1. Appoint a mid- to high-level administrator to lead the district's turnaround office or act as the district liaison for all schools undergoing turnaround or transformation.

2. Empower the district liaison or turnaround office to rapidly make decisions regarding the SIG-funded schools.

3. Understand that district systems and processes may require changes and improvements as well.

4. Strongly consider implementing changes recommended by the LTP.

5. Consider scaling up some promising practices or processes used in the SIG schools to the rest of the district.

6. Hold the LTP accountable for results by regularly monitoring progress against defined benchmarks, goals, and timelines, but do not restrict implementation at the school level.

7. The superintendent should regularly communicate information about the improvement process and the SIG requirements to the local school board.

Recommendations for the Field

1. States should ensure that LTP Request for Proposals (RFPs) seek providers who are ready to guide comprehensive whole school improvement, which may include district improvements as well.

2. States should assist districts in the selection/hiring process so that they choose LTPs who will develop capacity and make the needed changes.

3. LTPs could develop more diversity within the LTP marketplace (i.e., create a model that works well in rural schools).

4. Individual states, consortiums of states, or non-profit organizations could launch a formal incubation of LTP providers.

5. Strong LTP providers could develop a set of best or promising practices and publicize a list of the providers who abide by those practices and ideals.

6. A non-profit organization could build a training program or residency for organizations who want to become LTPs.

7. An oversight body could certify LTPs, through a rigorous review and evaluation process, to provide states and districts with guidance and to hold willing LTPs accountable (i.e., an accreditation).

8. To assist the research process, it would be useful if USED, states, and LTPs collect pre- and post- data on student performance, school culture, teacher quality, and other indicators of "successful" schools.

9. USED or a private entity could fund a comprehensive scientific, multi-year study to evaluate LTP partnerships, the LTPs themselves, and which practices and processes work in these schools.

Recommendations for States, Districts, and LTPs

1. Districts and states should scale up and embed promising practices and processes, which could be beneficial to other schools and districts, as they are implemented in the SIG schools.

2. LTPs should actively develop a step-down plan for SIG schools to provide necessary services but at a decreased cost.

3. Districts should plan for the decreasing LTP support from the onset of the initiative.

4. Improvement efforts should focus on increasing capacity throughout the system (i.e., LTP runs effort in year one, but acts as an advisor by year three).

5. Work together to identify which critical elements of the improvement model require ongoing support and funding, and identify recurring funds that could be reallocated to support that work.

6. States could pursue giving the state education chiefs the authority to over¬ride local school board elections or appointments for SIG-funded schools.

Recommendations for USED and States

1. While USED is making some progress in improving the application and approval timeline, the entire application and approval process should be shortened as much as possible, at both the state and federal level, to allow LTPs to begin evaluation and planning work in the spring before school-year implementation.

2. To shorten the state timeline, states requiring LTPs should not ask for complete improvement plans during the SIG application process, but should instead request information on the district's structure and process for selecting a LTP and how they plan to support the improvement effort. Once hired, LTPs should then complete the diagnostic/needs assessment and develop the improvement plan with the school and district. The state could then review the complete improvement plan, goals, and legal documents that guide the partnership.

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Introduction

In January 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) released revised guidance for use of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, a federal grant program designed to improve student achievement in persistently low-achieving public schools.[1] The federally allocated $3.5 billion, awarded to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) through competitive grants administered by their State Education Agencies (SEAs), is designated for the implementation of four school improvement models outlined by USED (see page 4 for more detail on the models).

Previous federal guidance for SIGs was less restrictive and allowed for more piecemeal school improvement efforts. The grants were also allocated by states to districts and schools via a formula that too often resulted in money being spread too thinly, across too many schools, to have significant impact. While some schools improved, few stayed off the state improvement lists for consecutive years.

The revised federal program is intended to significantly change the roles and responsibilities of the school, district, state, and partners. States are required to use a competitive application process to allocate funds to the schools with the highest level of need (United States General Accountability Office, 2011). The types of improvement strategies required under the SIG program involve intensive intervention efforts in schools and often necessitate changes at the district level as well. The revised guidelines seek long-term systemic and comprehensive solutions to change how schools and districts operate and educate students.

The revised federal guidance for the SIG program also encourages the use of external partners to support and supplement the limited capacity at the schools and districts implementing the restart, turnaround, or transformation improvement models (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). External partners have an

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[1]Under 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

extensive history of supporting improvement efforts in low-performing schools, but both the revised federal guidance and guidance from many states recognize the need for more comprehensive school reform partners. Such partners would guide the improvement effort and address instruction, professional development, operations, and the overall systems of both the school and district.

Over the past year, bloggers, education researchers, and news outlets have called attention to the influx of new providers entering the Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) marketplace (Corbett, 2010; Dillon, 2010; Hassel & Doyle, 2010; Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011) As LTP providers enter the field, some have relevant knowledge and experiences, but others are just beginning to take on more comprehensive improvement efforts. Even the most seasoned education support organizations acknowledge that implementing systemic and sustainable school improvement, within the revised federal models, is a new type of work for everyone.

The term "Lead Turnaround Partner" (LTP), or sometimes "Lead Partner" (LP), refers to education organizations working with schools and districts to turn around a persistently low-achieving school. These partnerships are most often funded with federal SIG dollars and implement either the federally defined turnaround or transformation models. LTPs could be non-profit organizations, a Charter Management Organization (CMO), a university, or another education-related support provider (i.e., professional development, curriculum, instruction, or assessment specialists).

> The four federally defined school improvement models include:
>
> - **Transformation:** Implement all of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms; (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.
>
> - **Turnaround:** Replace the principal, release the current school staff and rehire no more than 50% of the school staff, and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
>
> - **Restart:** Convert a school into one operated by a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
>
> - **School closure:** Close a school and enroll its students in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
>
> (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a)

This report is a straight-forward, descriptive analysis of the marketplace of LTPs currently working with persistently low-achieving schools under the SIG

program. The observations, lessons learned, and recommendations in this report are based on:

- Surveys (written, phone, or both) completed by administrators responsible for SIGs or "school turnaround" in three SEAs (additional email correspondence with two SEAs);
- Review of SIG policy and process documents (including Requests for Proposals [RFPs]) of eight SEAs;
- Surveys (written, phone, or both) completed by administrators from seven LTP organizations operating in these states;
- Email correspondence and review of LTP or turnaround work policy and process documents and marketing materials of twelve LTP organizations; and,
- Observations from researching, working with, and providing technical assistance to states using LTPs to implement the SIG program.

This report is not inclusive of all states using LTPs or of all organizations already working in or beginning to work in this field.[2] Specifically, due to their limited national perspective, small companies that support improvement efforts in one or two schools are not included in this analysis. Self-reported data and comments from representatives of LTPs and SEAs are not directly attributed to the source, and their validity is not independently confirmed. A list of the participating organizations can be found in the References and Resources section.

This report highlights the promising practices of LTPs and how states and districts can help or inhibit their improvement efforts in persistently low-achieving schools. Areas of analysis include: the existing marketplace (both supply and demand), the varying definitions of the LTP role, the organizational structures of LTPs, roles and responsibilities, lessons learned, and recommendations for future LTP partnerships.

It is important to note that while the federal grant program that has spawned most of the LTP partner work and underlies our focus here is called the *School* Improvement Grant program, changes at the district level are almost always needed. Persistently low-achieving schools are inevitably a reflection of their districts, and any improvements made at the school level are not sustainable without systemic changes and improvements

> *"The amount of work and the type of work the districts are required to do [to improve the schools] requires external support. Districts have so much else going on, and Lead Turnaround Partners are required to focus on the reform efforts. In some cases, even the extra human capital to think about a plan and to train teachers is helpful."*
> State Education Agency Staff Member

[2]The Academic Development Institute, the Center on Innovation & Improvement, Corbett Education Consulting, and Public Impact do not endorse any specific Lead Turnaround Partner provider described in this publication.

within the district central offices (Kowal, Ayscue Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). Historically, most Lead Turnaround Partners worked directly with schools; thus, taking on district-level improvements is a new challenge and adds additional variables to the improvement process.

Extensive and scientific research is needed to truly validate the transformation and turnaround models, the use of LTPs, and to clarify which LTPs are succeeding at rapidly improving persistently low-achieving schools. Such research requires detailed analysis of pre- and post-indicators of school culture, student discipline, school safety, parental involvement, teacher quality, and most importantly, student performance. Until that level of research is complete, it is important that LTPs, states, and districts examine and share real-time lessons learned about which strategies seem to work and which strategies might be terminated.

While LTPs are essentially competitors for contracts, they must learn from each other to move the entire field forward. This report is designed to help existing and emerging LTPs learn from each other and will help states refine their support strategies to assist LTPs. More importantly, LTPs must support the growth of the field as a whole for a variety of reasons, including:

- To validate (and refine) the improvement models;
- To encourage potential LTPs to enter the field;
- To spur private funds to incubate new LTPs;
- To determine if high levels of school improvement funding produce results; and most importantly,
- To improve the quality of education for our most at-risk students.

Marketplace

Definitions of Lead Turnaround Partner

There are numerous definitions of "Lead Turnaround Partner" being used by states and education organizations selling improvement services. While the specific contract requirements, autonomies, and responsibilities of LTPs vary by state, the idea behind LTPs, as defined for this report, is consistent with the definition established by Mass Insight Education and Research Institute's School Turnaround Group. The LTP concept was established to help schools and districts with limited capacity implement sustainable and scalable school improvement efforts.

This definition states,

> *Lead Partners are non-profit organizations or units of central offices on contract with the district central office or state to turn around schools.*
>
> *Lead Partners:*
>
> - ***Sign a 3-5 year performance contract for student achievement*** *with the district or state; the agreement:*
>   - *Assigns the Lead Partner responsibility for a small 'intentional' cluster of schools where systems and programs will be aligned*

- ▪ *Holds the Lead Partner accountable for improving student achievement*
- ■ *Assume authority for decision making on school staffing (as well as time, money, and program); in particular, the Lead Partner:*
  - ▪ *Hires a new principal or approves the current one*
  - ▪ *Supports the principal in hiring and replacing teachers and has responsibility for bringing in a meaningful cohort of new instructional staff*
- ■ *Provide core academic and student support services, directly or by aligning the services of other program and support partners who are on sub-contracts with the Lead Partner, and build internal capacity within the schools and, by extension, the district*
- ■ *Has an **embedded, consistent, and intense relationship with each school** during the turnaround period (5 days per week)"* (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 2010).

Most state definitions include the following LTP characteristics; the exact language varies by state:

- ■ Permissible structure—Education Management Organization (EMO), non-profit or for profit, improvement support provider, or university

- ■ Legal agreement—Works under a contract with either the district or the SEA

- ■ Purpose—Manage the turnaround or transformation process

- ■ Experience—Demonstrated experience with both schools and districts in school turnaround

- ■ Breadth—Understanding that turnaround requires increased knowledge and skills, and improved structures, systems, and processes

- ■ Goal—Drastically improve student performance

- ■ Sustainability—Increase capacity at the school and district level, so improvements are sustained after the three year period ends

> *"The demand for Lead Turnaround Partners is not strong in [our state] for two reasons:*
>
> 1. *There is not a strong track record of successful partnerships in the past; and,*
>
> 2. *A new state law require[s] that superintendents turn around their underperforming schools in three years or the state puts the school under receivership; the new law also [gives] districts new authorities with respect to changing collective bargaining provisions and other new flexibilities.*
>
> *Given the high stakes to succeed, the new authorities districts can exercise, and the mixed track record of vendors turning around schools, districts are reluctant to 'turn over' authority to [LTP] operators."*
>
> State Education Agency Staff Member

States' Use of Lead Turnaround Partners

Nearly all states allow schools and districts to use either external partners or more comprehensive LTPs to support school improvement efforts; 15 states have

preferred or approved provider lists (McMurrer, Dietz, & Stark Rentner, 2011), and a smaller number of states (and districts) require certain persistently low-achieving schools to work with an LTP. The definitions and requirements of LTPs are included in the state-issued RFPs (examples of which can be found in the References and Resources section). Summaries of states' use of LTPs are briefly explained below.

Colorado

Persistently low-achieving schools that receive SIG funds and select the federally defined turnaround, transformation, or restart improvement models (or the state-defined turnaround partner or external management models) are expected to form a partnership with an external partner. In year one, the state completed an RFP process to create an approved provider list that was given to districts and schools. The state also contracted with external reviewers to review districts' contracts with the external partners. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) then provided non-binding recommendations to districts based on the reviewers' comments to ensure appropriate authority and autonomy for both the partner and school were clearly specified.

A 2011 examination of Colorado's system of support for struggling schools determined that most approved external partners working in the state provide assistance services to persistently low-achieving schools, as opposed to comprehensive whole school and governance reform.[3] While both types of partners are permissible under Colorado's SIG program, there are fewer comprehensive reform partners than those who specialize in one area of expertise.

In year two of the new SIG program, the state is not providing a list of approved external partners due to the belief that vetting, advocating for any specific vendors, or managing that process is beyond the purview of the SEA (email correspondence with CDE, July 2011). In effect, schools and districts must research and form partnerships with external partners on their own.

Hawaii

In 2003, Hawaii designed a restructuring framework to assist the state's[4] growing number of persistently low-achieving schools. The Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) recognized the need for additional (and external) supports and expertise to turn around the schools and issued an RFP for vendors in the fall of 2004. Ten vendors responded, and a five-person committee evaluated the applications. The state selected three LTP-type[5] organizations to manage the restructuring effort in 20 schools (EdisonLearning, 2011). In subsequent years, RFP responses were vetted by a committee of 25 professionals.

The RFP and procurement process is run by HIDOE's Special Programs Management Section. This division significantly reduces the amount of work and

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[3]See the following report for greater detail on Colorado's SIG program: *School Turnarounds in Colorado: Untangling a Web of Supports for Struggling Schools* (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011).
[4]Hawaii is a unified SEA/LEA, so no separate districts exist.
[5]The LTP concept did not exist in 2003, but the Hawaii providers are essentially LTPs guiding school improvement efforts. America's Choice (with a subcontract to SchoolNet), EdisonLearning and Educational Testing Service (ETS) were approved providers in 2005.

time needed to select and contract with the external providers (Hess & Squire, 2009). The state monitors the partnerships regularly; one of the original providers was removed from a handful of schools due to insufficient gains in schools (Hess & Squire).

Illinois

Persistently low-achieving schools that receive SIG funds and choose the federally defined turnaround, transformation, or restart models are required to work with an LTP. For the 2010-11 school year, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) issued RFPs for both Lead and Supporting Partners. For the 2011-12 school year, the RFP only requested proposals for LTPs. ISBE's definition of LTPs states,

> *Lead Turnaround Partners are responsible for implementing coherent, whole school reform efforts that integrate structural and programmatic interventions, including daily on-site support, leadership, and assistance in the participating school and LEA. Both the LEA and the Lead Turnaround Partner share accountability for the successful implementation of the selected intervention model with the ultimate goal of substantially raising student achievement.*
> (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011)

The RFP for LTPs for year two (2011-12) seeks more holistic and comprehensive partners that can either provide all of the required services for schools themselves or subcontract with other entities to provide those services. These changes resulted from the realization that some LTPs are not taking on the necessary level of responsibility and that there was too often confusion about the roles and authorities between the LTPs, the various Supporting Partners, the district, and the school principals.

Indiana

Indiana's improvement plan includes a variation of the turnaround model. Before a school is taken over by the state (after six years on "academic probation"), a Turnaround School Operator (TSO) is hired to manage the school. Post-turnaround, the school becomes an independent school, not managed by, but affiliated with the existing school district. One year of transition and planning is included in the model, and TSOs work under a five-year contract, with the option of a five-year renewal. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) completed an RFP process; eleven providers responded to the RFP and three finalists were approved as TSOs[6] (Indiana Department of Education, 2011b).

The TSO-run improvement process is one of the intervention options for the state's persistently low-achieving schools. Seven schools were identified for state intervention for the 2011-12 school year, and IDOE will select one of the intervention models, including working with a TSO, for each school (Indiana Department of Education, 2011a).

Massachusetts

Persistently low-achieving schools receiving SIG funds in Massachusetts are permitted to work with LTPs to implement any of the federally defined

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[6]Charter Schools USA, EdisonLearning, and EdPower

improvement models. Any school selecting the restart model must use an external partner to manage the school, but the partner could be either a CMO or an EMO (working within a modified district structure). The state has a list of approved partners that can be used to implement the transformation, turnaround, or restart models and provides the list of vendors to districts as requested.

An important difference in Massachusetts is that the Commonwealth considers districts with one or more persistently low-achieving schools, in addition to problems found during the district review process, a Level 4[7] district. This designation requires district redesign as well as reform at the school level.

If a school is advanced to Level 5[8], a Restart Operator will be contracted by the state to manage the school. The Restart Operator definition is similar to the federal definition of an EMO or CMO, and the partner receives full autonomy to manage the school and is held accountable for improvements though a contract with the district.

In Massachusetts, a Lead Turnaround Partner for Level 4 schools:

> *Works in partnership with the LEA to determine aspects of the school and shares decision-making authority with the district. This approach can vary from district-to-district and can range from the Lead Turnaround Partner being responsible for curriculum, instruction, and PD only; a principal coaching role; a "general contractor" role where the Lead Turnaround Partner is charged with managing multiple partners a school has working with them; a completely shared governance model; or a thought partner to the district and/or school leadership. The defining feature of the "Lead Turnaround Partner"[in MA] is that the LEA is still the major decision maker even though many aspects of the school operations and management reside with the Lead Turnaround Partner.* (SEA survey/interview)

New York

The state issued a Request for Information (RFI) in early 2010 to learn which providers had an interest in working with New York's persistently low-achieving schools and what type of services those vendors would provide. The RFP for LTPs has yet to be released.

In June, 2011, New York announced a new program designed to support improvement efforts in Tier III schools[9] (New York State Education Department, 2011). Eligible schools that receive funds must select one of six design frameworks and an LTP, or a Partner Consortium (teams of one to three external partner organizations), to implement the framework.

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[7]"Level 4 districts identified by quantitative and qualitative indicators through a district review; districts with one or more schools among the lowest performing and least improving 2% based on quantitative indicators." (MA DESE, Framework for District Accountability and Assistance)

[8]"Level 5: [The state board of education appoints] a body to share responsibility for major budgetary, personnel, and policy decisions at the school and/or district level as needed." (MA DESE, Framework for District Accountability and Assistance)

[9]Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is not currently designated "persistently lowest-achieving."

Tennessee

In Tennessee, there are three levels of intervention for low-performing schools (Tennessee Department of Education, 2010):

- Focus Schools are at the earliest stages of low-performance (based on NCLB improvement categories) and receive targeted supports.

- Renewal Schools (those in corrective action and restructuring under NCLB) are required to select a Whole School Reform Model, use a comprehensive reform vendor from the state approved list, and are eligible for SIG funds.

- If schools reach Restructuring 2 (the fifth year in NCLB's improvement status) or if the school is a Title I school that meets the U.S. Department of Education's definition of "persistently lowest achieving schools," it may be removed from the local education agency and placed into the Achievement School District (ASD). The ASD Superintendent has the authority to implement federal or state improvement models or hire a charter school operator[10] to manage the school. The ASD Superintendent also has state-level authority over the school operator or other partners, contract terms, and both the school's and partner's autonomy.

To date, the Renewal Schools are the primary user of LTP-type vendors. The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) completed two rounds of the vendor approval process, the first of which allowed just three weeks from RFP release to the submission date. Twenty to thirty external reviewers, convened over two days, received training and evaluated the proposal responses (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 2011).

Virginia

Persistently low-achieving schools receiving SIG funds and implementing the turnaround, transformation, or restart models are required to use LTPs. Low-performing schools not receiving SIG funds, but that are called in front of the State Board of Education for lack of improvement, may also use LTPs. State facilitators are assigned to each SIG school to monitor and support implementation, and the Commonwealth sponsors frequent in-person and electronically supported technical assistance sessions.

Lead Turnaround Partner: Definition of Role

Definitions of the LTP role, gathered in the LTP surveys and interviews, focus on the relationships between the various entities and the goal of sustainable improved student learning, and include:

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[10]The ASD, New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO), and the Recovery School District of Louisiana (RSD) received $6.8 million through the Investing in Innovation (i3) program to fund charter operators who commit to turn around existing, academically unacceptable public schools in Memphis or Nashville. "The goal of [these grants] is to build the permanent infrastructure and capacity to replace persistently low-performing schools with charter restarts executed by high-performing charter organizations." (ASD i3 Cover Letter, http://www.tn.gov/firsttothetop/docs/ASD_i3_Cover_Letter.pdf)

Purpose

- "To coordinate partners into a seamless team, to make sure there is an implementation calendar, to insure a focus on classroom change and not just a leadership change."

- "As a full advisor."

- "To work in genuine partnership with school, district, and state. To provide high quality program leadership and management and the ability to lead high quality teaching and learning."

- "To perform a thorough assessment of school needs and assets. To develop a comprehensive and sustainable reform plan that accounts for the unique needs of the school. To monitor implementation of the plan and to ensure it is implemented well."

- "The role of the [LTP] is to change the behaviors of practitioners and stake-holders in ways that produce better learning results for students by main-taining a laser focus on student data. Our role further involves providing resources and developing knowledge through professional development, coaching, and the modeling of sound instructional practices."

Goals and Sustainability

- "The role of the [LTP] is to provide the necessary support to build capacity for instructional effectiveness, so that when the [LTP] exits the school, the school will continue to embed effective practices and utilize the continuous improvement cycle for further growth."

- "The goal is to increase student achievement at schools that have histori-cally performed poorly with the goal [of] quickly [transforming] them into high achieving schools in a collaborative, systematic, and coherent manner."

Scope of LTPs' Responsibility and Authority

Changing classroom practice and improving instruction are most often included in the LTPs' definitions of their role. While SEA and LTP staff concur that instruction is a central focus of improvement efforts, LTP staff place less emphasis on the capacity building and coaching role, which SEA staff believe must occur with both the school and district. One LTP reflects that while [their organization] tries to take on the guiding and overall advisory role that is desired both by the Partners and the states, they are often constrained by the politics and personalities in the districts (LTP surveys/interviews).

The LTPs included in this study report meeting some of the requirements or conditions included in the original definition, but not all.[11] All surveyed LTPs report they have contracts with school districts, and five of seven have specified performance expectations defined in those contracts. In these cases, the LTPs are accountable for student performance and other benchmark goals and may be removed (or the district may not receive continuation funding from the state) if achievement goals are not met.

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[11] As defined by Mass Insight Education and Research Institute

None of the LTPs surveyed has ultimate authority over time, money, people, and program (student support services or general instruction).[12] All LTPs surveyed have strong influence in all decisions related to people, time, money, and especially program, but the school principal, the superintendent, and/or school boards remain the final decision-makers about instruction, staffing, and school operations.

All LTPs surveyed report having an embedded, consistent, and intense relationship with the schools with which they work. A few LTPs did not initially plan for full-time onsite staff. But, based on the needs at the school and rocky starts, the LTP increased both the number of staff and time onsite over the course of the year.

The states expect the LTPs to lead the improvement process, implement whatever changes are necessary, and develop enough capacity at the school and district level that results are sustainable when the additional supports are removed. Five of seven LTPs surveyed for this research describe a collaborative and support-based partnership. While both LTP and SEA staff acknowledge that collaboration is key to a partnership, SEA staff indicate that LTPs that have a laser-like focus on student performance, improved systems, and changed behaviors may produce stronger results (SEA surveys/interviews).

Entry to Marketplace

In a 2009 speech, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan put out the call to action: "We need everyone who cares about public education to get into the business of turning around our lowest-performing schools. That includes states, districts, nonprofits, for-profits, universities, unions, and charter organizations" (Dillon, 2010). This statement, in combination with billions of dollars allocated for improvement of the country's lowest performing schools, opened the floodgates of "turnaround" partners. One of the LTP providers interviewed for this publication states:

> *We've been around for awhile; we didn't spring up since ARRA [and the increase in school improvement grant funds] like others. Their involvement takes some of the heat off us as we're not the only ones in the game, but it also creates a better atmosphere for us [as the field expands and demand increases].* (LTP surveys/interviews)

This LTP elaborated that there is a lack of "successful" providers in the marketplace who can show sustained turnaround improvements, and the quality of LTPs must improve to validate the field as a whole.

> *"Many new groups seeking contracts are hoping merely to bring in a new curriculum or retrain some teachers. We call that turnaround lite"* (Dillon, 2010).

LTPs entered the field for a variety of reasons. Some suggest that providers jumped into the turnaround field purely because of the potential for financial gains, while others organizations entered the field

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[12]Having authority over people, time, money, and program could include: teacher hiring and removal, adjusting the schedule, implementing a new instructional program, or altering budgets.

because they believed they could help turn around low-performing schools (Dillon, 2010).

Some providers have experience and results with substantial school improvement efforts, while others are new to this level and type of reform. For example, a large national education company formed an LTP division, "which is seeking school-turnaround contracts in at least eight states. [The group's president] said that 'in recent years [the company] bought smaller companies that built [its] capacity to train teachers and could draw on [the newly acquired companies'] testing, technology, and other products to carry out a coherent school-improvement effort'" (Dillon, 2010). At this point, it is too soon to tell if this breadth of experience within one company will result in successful partnerships or if it will cause confusion within such a large and diverse organization.

Many organizations that created LTP divisions have historically provided topic-specific or specialized services[13] and must adjust their practices and mindsets when launching LTP-type partnerships. One LTP states, "If you're used to a model from the past, [you have to] figure out how to adapt that model to the new federal guidance. For example, if you've focused on instruction [in the past], now [you] have to include everything else" (LTP surveys/interviews). These LTPs have strong expertise in one or two areas, but their own comments indicate that they underestimated the need for and work required to implement conditional and structural changes at the district level (informal conversation with LTP).

Almost all LTPs surveyed and interviewed acknowledge that they underestimated the amount of work and the nature of turnaround in these persistently low-achieving schools. Even LTPs with lengthy histories of working in the school improvement field still struggled with the new federal guidelines and the LTP partnerships. One LTP reflects, "Even if you've done this type of work before, you will have a lot to learn in the first year. If you don't [learn], you're not doing a good job" (LTP surveys/interviews).

Lessons Learned by LTPs

- **Prior Experience**—While completing research, developing research-based models, and understanding existing research can enhance an LTP's knowledge base, it does not ensure that the current LTP staff is equipped to implement the improvement models in the field. Employing and training additional staff who have front line experience with condition changes and systemic improvements in schools and districts may result in more promising LTP partnerships.

- **Understanding Whole School Reform**—LTPs that have experience working with school districts, managing schools, and making systemic changes quickly took on the LTP role and defined their relationship with the school principal and district. LTPs with limited experience in comprehensive, whole-school reform and condition changes struggled to understand the level of support and changes needed at both the school and district levels.

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[13]Such specialized services could include: professional development, leadership coaching, curriculum enhancement, or data informed instructional practices.

Recommendations for LTPs

- Understand your strengths and weaknesses—ask yourself "what really makes us ready to take on this work and become an LTP?"

- Complete a thorough diagnosis of your organization to evaluate what content areas and skills are missing. Collaborate with other partners who can complement your specialties.

- If the LTP role is new to your organization, grow slowly and perfect your model before taking on too many schools.

Preapproval, Selection, and Contracting

For the 2010-11 school year, each state used a different process for approving and matching partners to schools. While some states did not use LTPs, as defined above, the nine states profiled in this report allow schools and districts to work with external partners to support their improvement efforts. Research by the Center on Education Policy (McMurrer, Dietz, & Stark Rentner, 2011) found that a "majority (34) of the responding states plan to provide guidance to districts in finding and selecting these external providers. Smaller shares of these states intend to make available a list of state-approved external providers (15 states) or offer training to external providers (8 states)."

While exact processes slightly vary by state, the preapproval, selection, and contracting process usually includes the following steps:[14]

1. SEA holds a pre-process meeting or conference call to allow LTPs the opportunity to ask questions and/or the SEA releases a RFI

2. SEA releases formal RFP

3. SEA evaluates proposals and posts an approved list online

4. Approved LTPs present to school/district teams or participate in LTP fairs (arranged by SEAs)

5. Districts select LTPs

6. Negotiate and sign MOUs or Election to Work Agreements between teachers associations and districts

7. Negotiate and sign contracts with districts

The state process is partially determined by USED's approval of each state's SIG application.

USED Suggested Timeline for 2009-10

While some states received approval and were able to distribute funds according to this suggested timeline, others did not receive approval from USED until late-spring or the summer of 2010. As a result, the state competitive grant process for districts was also delayed, which delayed the LTP contracting process even further. The late approval of state, and their respective districts, applications

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[14]Similar steps are identified in *Forging partnerships for turnaround: Emerging lessons from state RFP processes.* (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 2011).

resulted in some SIG interventions not being launched by the start of 2010-11 school year. The suggested federal timeline for year one is below.

Figure 1: USED Timeline for SIG Implementation

(United States General Accountability Office, 2011)

The implications of the federal application and approval process were seen in Illinois; the state did not receive federal approval for their SIG plan until August 2010. As a result, the entire LTP selection and contracting process was delayed, and LTPs did not begin work until mid-way into the school year (SEA survey/ interview). "Given these timelines, states were under considerable pressure to develop an adequate grant application and get funds to schools as quickly as possible" (McMurrer, Dietz, & Stark Rentner, 2011).

A recent federal audit of the SIG program cited the timeline issue as a frequent problem across all levels. The report states, "Despite [the U.S. Department of Education's] efforts to address these issues, late approval of state applications has remained an issue for [school year] 2011-12. For example, as of late June, 2011, six states had not received approval of their SIG applications [for year two]. [Department of Education] officials told [the General Accountability Office] that in many of these situations, states had submitted applications late. Although [Department of Education] officials recognized the continuing challenges with SIG time frames, they have not yet identified steps to address these issues" (United States General Accountability Office, 2011).

Preapproval

All states surveyed for this research and the LTPs report that most states using LTPs released an RFP to create an approved or preferred provider list of partners for the 2010-11 school year. The RFPs and evaluation processes varied in rigor, and some states were frustrated by the lack of responses from "comprehensive" partners.[15] (Links to state RFPs can be found in the References and Resources section.)

> In a 2011 CEP report, state deputy superintendents reported that for the 2010-11 school year:
>
> ■ 9 states awarded their SIG funds to districts between February and June 2010;
>
> ■ 26 states awarded all their SIG funds between July and September 2010;
>
> ■ 2 states determined and distributed their SIG funds over a longer or different period of time;
>
> ■ 5 states expected to award their SIG funds to districts in October or November 2010;
>
> ■ 1 state anticipated awarding their SIG funds in December 2010 or January 2011; and,
>
> ■ 4 states expected to award their SIG funds after January 2011 (McMurrer, Dietz, & Stark Rentner, 2011).

Based on the experiences with the revised federal guidance to date, it would be beneficial for states to more clearly define the specific roles and responsibilities of an LTP in their state. LTPs should market their strengths to districts and schools and clearly define the type of partnership they seek. If the use of supporting or other external partners is permitted by the state, those partners should not be classified as LTPs, nor should they be eligible to lead SIG interventions.

Matching

Because the process for approving providers was most often based on the quality of responses to the RFP, many LTPs appreciated states that provided further guidance to districts during the selection process. "Don't just leave it up to the districts to figure out which provider would be the best," recommends one LTP. Other LTPs echoed the concern that district staff, who often lack the capacity themselves, are asked to select an LTP when they may not fully understand the school's needs or the purpose of the SIG program.

In addition to understanding the school's needs, the district must understand that within the LTP field, the LTPs fall along a spectrum of intensity and have different focus areas and types of expertise. Understanding the level and types of services an LTP provides is also an important consideration for states as they create an approved provider list (or simply a provider list), as well as when districts select a specific partner. The list should clearly describe the experience and approach of each LTP.

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[15]Similar findings are noted in *Forging partnerships for turnaround: Emerging lessons from state RFP processes.* (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 2011).

One LTP comments, "We're somewhat unique in the services we provide, as we're comprehensive and look at the whole-picture. When we're talking about the neediest schools, they need a more comprehensive solution. Other [schools] may need a lighter touch and may be resentful of that level of help."

Some states took a hands-off role and created an approved provider list but did little to facilitate matching schools and districts to the partners, while other states took an active matchmaking role. For example, Hawaii, Missouri, and South Carolina used similar strategies to complete a "needs assessment" of their SIG schools, categorize the schools by need, and then match the schools with specific partners based on the school's needs and the partner's strengths (LTP surveys/interviews). One state noted that they assumed a lighter-touch role in year one (2010-11) and allowed the districts to self-select LTPs,[16] but they encouraged the districts to select from a revised set of LTPs in year two (2011-12).

Contracting

Typically, three legal documents are central to the engagement of an LTP:

- The grant award between the SEA and the district outlining the requirements of and contingencies for continued SIG funding;

- The contract between the LTP and the school district, often called a Partnership Agreement, including student performance goals that the LTP must reach and any operational condition changes that the district must make to accommodate and support the LTP;

- The final legal document, which may not be necessary or feasible in some places, is the agreement between the teachers' association (union) and the school district. This document is usually an MOU or an Election-to-Work agreement (EWA) and outlines any condition changes which impact existing teacher contracts in the identified school, such as extended time, summer or weekend school, increased teacher in-service days, adjustments to salary or benefits, or revised evaluation procedures (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 2009, 2011)

LTPs included in this study generally prefer states that take a more active role during the RFP, selection, and contract negotiation process. One LTP staff member comments, "It requires states to dedicate some resources up front, [but] the best type of relationships form and the best scenario happens when the state has done more up front, identifying schools and categorizing schools based on the needs."

Lessons Learned for States

Support the Selection Process—In 2010-11, Virginia allowed the districts to select a partner from the list of approved LTPs. In year two, Virginia allowed the district to choose an LTP but with increased SEA input in terms of which models and partners might work best based on the first implementation year and which conditions should be negotiated during the contracting process. In effect, states

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[16]The revised set of LTPs was created based on SEA observations and monitoring of year one partnerships, some of which struggled throughout the year.

could assist schools and districts by helping them select an LTP based on the local needs, the local capacity limitations, and the strengths of the various partners. Comments from district staff imply that districts appreciate the state guidance, as district staff members often lack the time or skills to evaluate the various partners, many of whom are contacting the district with sales pitches.

Conduct Due Diligence—Based on the experiences of both states and LTPs in year one, it may be useful for states and districts to conduct additional due diligence during the creation of the approved provider lists and the selection process. As opposed to evaluating LTP responses to general RFP questions, states and districts could evaluate partners on their understanding of comprehensive reform, changing conditions, and implementing challenging programs or systems in the field.

States could also consult with other states or districts for references and feedback about how the various LTPs performed with other schools, districts, and states. As performance (student assessment and school culture) data become available, LTPs will have the ability to cite specific data related to their experience and expertise as an LTP. Districts must also exercise their own due diligence and recognize that while the state may approve a set of providers that does not guarantee a good fit for the school or district, nor does it ensure quality delivery of services.

For grant renewal in years two and three, if a school and district want to continue working with an LTP that is not implementing the requirements of the federal model with fidelity, the state could either deny the grant continuation or do so with stipulations, shorter contract terms, and additional conditions (United States General Accountability Office, 2011).

Support Contract Negotiations—States should assist districts during the contract or "Partnership Agreement" negotiation process. Districts likely need help determining performance goals and metrics, outlining expectations, and determining the consequences for not improving. States must also clarify the expectations for continued funding up front. Such expectations could impact both the LTP and the districts and include: required attendance at technical assistance sessions and meetings, full-time on the ground presence, and quarterly or monthly meetings with the superintendent.

Consider Timelines—Assuming the federal and state timelines do not change, states should not require a district to develop a full improvement plan before funding is approved and a partner is selected. Instead, district SIG applications in the spring should focus on the LTP selection process and the district structure that will support both the improvement effort and the LTP. Once approved for funding and the LTP contract is negotiated, the LTP, the school, and the district staff should then work together to assess the needs of the school and develop an aligned and comprehensive implementation plan which is approved by the state.

Recommendations for States

- Dedicate state resources in the initial planning steps (identifying SIG-eligible schools by need, recruiting, and matching LTPs with the schools).

- Use more stringent criteria to approve LTPs, including evidence of success with LTP-type efforts.

- Categorize schools into different groups based on their needs.

- Categorize LTPs into different groups based on their strengths.

- Change the focus of the district's SIG application from the implementation plan to the improvement support structures and processes.

- Help districts understand their needs and how to select the right LTP.

- Provide a model contract or Partnership Agreement to the districts.

Implementation

Organizational Structure

While the structure of the home office varies across the LTPs, there are many similarities, especially for the mid-size and larger providers.[17] Large LTP organizations have a more well-defined organizational structure that allows full-time staff in the field; regular contact with a high-level director within the LTP central office; and support as needed by curriculum, content, and program specialists. Larger organizations also pull in additional specialists as needed at the school or district level, for example, human resource personnel to assist with recruitment, evaluation, or hiring.

The turnaround team at the school level most often consists of the LTP Turnaround Manager/Lead Turnaround Consultant, the district liaison,[18] and the school-based leadership team (which could include the assistant principal, teachers, a data manager, the guidance director). Based on year one experiences of both LTPs and states, this team should meet weekly, or at minimum once every two weeks, to discuss action steps for the week, data trends, barriers, and progress of the improvement plan.

In general, the LTP Turnaround Manager/Lead Turnaround Consultant meets at least monthly with the district liaison to discuss and evaluate the implementation of the improvement plan and to address any district needs. Additional district staff members are involved on an as-needed basis, for example, the district's

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[17]For the purpose of this publication the following designations are used: small providers have 1-4 staff members who may be full- or part-time, and work with four or fewer turnaround/transformation/comprehensive reform schools, usually in one district or region; mid-size providers have between 5-24 full-time employees and work with 5-15 turnaround/transformation/comprehensive reform schools in more than one district or region; and large providers have over 25 full-time employees and work with more than 16 turnaround/transformation/comprehensive reform schools, usually across multiple districts, regions, and states.

[18]District liaisons are the primary contact for LTP partnerships/turnaround schools at the district level. This person or office advocates for the SIG schools and helps limit the bureaucracy of traditional district structures. For more information see the section on District Roles and Responsibilities.

data staff is sometimes involved with the quarterly reports, and the human resource staff may assist or observe the teacher evaluation process. The level of involvement of other district staff generally depends on the existing capacity at the district and the alignment of district policies and practices to those of the LTP.

Lead Turnaround Partner Roles & Responsibilities

(titles vary by provider):

Turnaround Manager/Lead Turnaround Consultant

- Guides the day-to-day implementation of school improvement plan
- In the school ¾ to full time
- Daily contact with the school administrative team
- Frequent contact with a district staff member overseeing the improvement efforts
- Provides one-on-one leadership coaching with the school principal
- Communicates needs and action steps with all stakeholders (school staff, parents, district, other partners, LTP home office)

Instructional, Program, or Support Specialists

- Provide teachers direct support in the classroom, specific content support, professional development, data analysis, classroom walk-throughs, leadership development, special education support
- Assist with monitoring and reporting of instructional change
- Provide weekly support (or daily as needed)

Senior Vice President/Director

- Oversees, monitors, and coordinates school improvement in multiple schools and across multiple states
- Assists with district changes and supports, i.e. negotiating operating flexibilities, acquiring additional resources, building district systems (data, teacher evaluation, curriculum alignment)
- Consults with the field teams
- Reviews the district data and progress against benchmarks
- Guides changes to the LTP structure and processes based on the needs in the field
- Based at the home office

Figure 2: Sample Organizational Chart
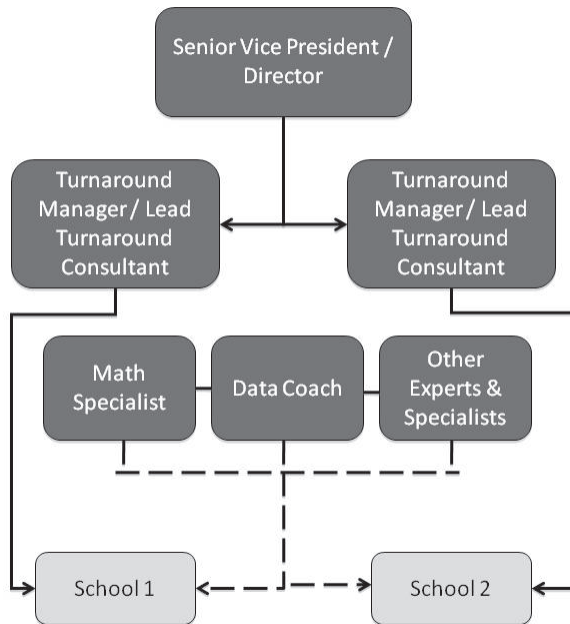
In addition to the field staff, managers, and directors, large LTP organizations include an expansive central office to support the work in the field. The central office structures vary within each LTP organization, but all share four main areas of work:

- Academics,
- Operations,
- Data & Assessment, and
- Human Capital.[19]

The number and level of staff working within each area depends upon both the age of the organization's "turnaround" or LTP division and the size of the organization as a whole. For example, a mid-size LTP may share staff not only across schools, but also across districts and states. Only one Director of Operations may exist for all LTP schools.

In contrast, a large LTP provider may have entire departments devoted to each line of work. One LTP states, "We haven't had to call on our HR [human resources] department yet to help with hiring or HR issues in [one of the SIG schools], but if we need to, we can." Another LTP with numerous divisions states, "We can draw upon specific services and expertise within the organization to address particular needs (e.g., the school leadership center [can] develop a new system of evaluation for principals)" (LTP surveys/interviews).

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[19]Work stream areas are consistent with central office structures of large CMOs or districts and findings from the Citybridge Foundation's research on LTPs.

Lessons Learned by LTPs

Staffing Up—Due to the late timeline for approval and distribution of SIG funds in 2010-2011 (most contracts were not signed with LTPs until mid-summer 2010), LTP administrators found it difficult to staff up appropriately. Some providers pulled staff from other regions or schools to cover the first few weeks of a new partnership, while others started the work without having the right people in place. This problem affects organizations of all sizes, but is especially challenging for a small- or mid-size providers that may have limited capital funds to hire staff before partnership contracts are signed. Unless the federal and state timelines change to allow states and districts to approve and distribute funds long before the school year starts, providers may need to either hire staff before contracts are signed or have approved consultants on standby.

Matchmaking—Not only does the philosophy of the LTP need to align to the district's and the school's needs, but the LTP staff and the school staff must also develop a positive working relationship. Rocky relationships at the beginning can doom a turnaround effort before it even begins and must be addressed quickly. Some providers sent more than one pre-approved candidate to the school sites and allowed the local teams to select the LTP Lead Manager. This allowed the LTP to maintain control over the quality of candidates, while also allowing the local school and district staff to participate in the process.

In one case, the LTP Lead Manager changed during the 2010-11 school year because the level of personality conflict affected the quality of work. Experiences of several LTPs suggest that when conflicts arise it is important to deduce the root of the conflict; sometimes people simply cannot work together, but other cases may arise when school and district staff resist reasonable changes required by the improvement models and suggested by the LTP. If the latter is the cause, the LTP would then need to address the larger systemic issue of leading change with the school and district leadership.

Adequate Field Staffing—Many LTPs realized on their own that full-time field staff on the ground are absolutely necessary for the first year of improvement implementation. That intensity may (and should) decrease in years two and three as district and school capacity increases, but many LTPs and states suggest that full-time field staff are crucial in year one. As a result of other LTPs not recognizing this need, some states highly recommended or included such a contingency in the continuation grant awards to specific partnerships.

Recommendations for LTPs

- Ensure staffing plans allow for at least one full-time, on-site LTP staff member.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities with the LTP and with the school/district staff.
- If staff personalities conflict, figure out why, and then make adjustments as necessary.
- Develop a "Plan B" for field staffing with the assumption that contracts might not be signed until mid-summer.

■ Hold regular (e.g., monthly) internal meetings with all the LTP staff (across sites, districts, and states) to monitor progress with current and new school partners, address common issues, discuss the changing field, share best practices, and create a learning community that focuses on continuous improvement within the LTP organization.

Improvement and Implementation Plan

Once the contract is signed, staff assigned, and roles defined, the work begins. While the schools studied for this publication completed applications for 2010-2011 School Improvement Grant funds prior to selecting an LTP, some Partners reflect that the improvement plans in the applications sometimes lacked the comprehensive elements of reform needed in the schools (LTP surveys/interviews). While some districts have the capacity to develop a strong SIG application that addresses the real needs of the school, most districts do not have the capacity (time or skill sets) to accurately assess the needs of the school and design an improvement plan around those needs. Many school- or district-created plans include a myriad of programs that might improve some schools'

Crucial First Implementation Steps Identified for and by LTPs

- ■ Staff field team
- ■ Establish working relationships with school and district
- ■ Create school leadership team and begin regular meetings
- ■ Complete diagnostic/needs assessment
- ■ Determine priorities and broad timeline (there are 93 implementation steps/indicators in the federal transformation model and they all must be addressed over the three year grant period)[20]
- ■ Create implementation plan for the first year—broken down by month or quarter (LTP surveys/interviews)

and students' performance, but that are not directly aligned to the needs of the individual school. For example, an LTP reflects: "In one state, we had a school that included 20 days of teacher in-service training on project-based learning in their improvement plan. While it's a great program, it's not going to really work until [they] fix the core issues within the school and the district."

In effect, the LTPs often discarded the original SIG application improvement plans and completed their own diagnostic or needs assessment of the school and district. This needs assessment varied in the level of analysis and the amount of time it took to complete. Most providers used this tool to appropriately staff the school, to create the implementation plan, and to guide their work.

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[20]The 93 indicators or implementation steps are divided into 11 strands which include: Establishing & Orienting the District Transformation Team; Moving Toward School Autonomy; Selecting a Principal & Recruiting Teachers; Working with Stakeholders & Building Support for Transformation; Contracting with External Providers; Establishing & Orienting the School; Transformation Team; Leading Change; Evaluating, Rewarding, and Removing Staff; Providing Rigorous Staff Development; Increasing Learning Time; and Reforming Instruction.

Lessons Learned

Joint Creation of Improvement Plan—When the timeline allows, LTPs recommend that the LTP helps draft the school improvement application and especially the improvement plan. This collaboration starts alignment early on and ensures that the districts put the right strategies in their grant applications. This may be a risk for some LTPs as specific schools may not receive funding in the end. However, this level of collaboration and support at the beginning may increase the chance of receiving funds, as well as give the partnership a much needed early start.

Adjust Services and Staff as Needed—LTPs reflect that they need to match their own services and staff to the needs of the school. Completing a strong diagnostic and/or needs assessment early on can help the LTP plan for additional supports over the course of the partnership. One LTP reflects: "What you've done in the past may or may not be what this school needs. It's more than just who's a good provider. You could do the same things in multiple schools or districts, but you'll end up of with completely different results" (LTP surveys/interviews). Many LTPs added content experts and specialists throughout the year based on the changing needs of specific school sites.

Establish Relationships and Boundaries—Based on the differences in LTP and state definitions of a "Lead Turnaround Partner," it is not surprising that many LTPs struggled with role definition and how to establish boundaries. LTPs recommend more clearly defining the scope of work in the Partnership Agreement and having some tough discussions early on to make sure that everyone is on the same page. One LTP states: "Sometimes Partners feel they are there to only support [the schools and district staff], when in effect, [the Partners] must take on a guiding role for the first year" (LTP surveys/interviews). Capacity builds over the first year and the level of

> *"[As an LTP], we needed to 'take on' the lead position in places where there were other partners who thought of themselves as independent agents. You must make that connection and role division quickly."*
>
> Lead Turnaround Partner Staff Member

intensity decreases, but the LTP must truly lead the implementation the first year. The Partner is not hired to make the changes alone, but is instead there to direct change while building the capacity of the existing school and district staff.

Recommendations for States, Districts, and LTPs

- States should understand that the implementation plan may significantly vary from the SIG application because the action steps, goals, and strategies need to reflect the needs assessment.

- Districts should not use SIG as a way to fund programs they want to implement but that are not aligned to the needs of the school; emphasis should be on changed practice rather than the implementation of pet programs.

- LTP's should be assertive with the district. Be vocal about the needs of the school and critique every decision. Ensure that the LTP and the improvement effort are not considered as add-on's to the existing school and district structures.

- Include as many stakeholders as possible in the creation of the implementation plan. One LTP provided a half-day in-service with the entire teaching faculty at a school so that the teachers identified the problems and helped create possible solutions. The LTP completed a diagnostic beforehand and generally knew what should be included, but involving more staff in the planning process garnered additional buy-in early in the process.

Supporting Roles and Responsibilities

In a turnaround partnership, the school principal and the LTP are the major implementers, but the district and state are also important players that can either support the process or inhibit success. One LTP reflects, "The ideal partner is open and engaged; the change needs to happen at school as well as at the district. [The district must] hold us accountable and do it relentlessly. [It's a] delicate balance. When the state is involved, it's the same—[they must hold us accountable]" (LTP surveys/interviews).

The State Role

Monitoring and guiding the revised SIG program is a new role for SEAs, and one that many struggled to take on the first year. SEAs historically focused on compliance, so supporting implementation in the field created a number of growing pains and required adjustments to both staffing and practices.

> *"States must closely monitor and check in on alignment of the actual improvement plan with the needs of the school and district on a regular basis. And, monitor implementation with fidelity! By the time it trickles down to the schools, intention is often lost."*
>
> State Education Agency Staff Member

The state's main role is to support and monitor the turnaround process. This can be done in a variety of ways, including:

- Releasing an RFP for LTPs and creating a preferred vendor list;

- Assisting districts and LTPs during the selection/hiring process;

- Assisting districts and LTPs during the contract negotiation process;

- Communicating with the local turnaround teams on a regular basis (i.e., school principal, LTP lead, district liaison);

- Holding statewide meetings or technical assistance sessions for all local turnaround teams;

- Holding statewide conference calls for all local turnaround teams;

- Providing additional resources, research, and information to help local turn-around teams figure out how to plan and implement improvement efforts;

- Making changes to the state requirements as the needs in the field change;

- Supporting the tough decisions (i.e., does the state provide support for district leadership when decisions must be made?);

- Holding the district accountable for its actions or inactions;

- Holding the LTP accountable for its actions or inactions;

- Sending SEA staff or liaisons into the turnaround schools at least once a month; and,

- Monitoring progress at least quarterly (LTP surveys/interviews).

The revised SIG program encourages states to take on a more active role with the prioritized schools (Morando Rhim, 2011). A study of early implementation of the revised SIG program found, "All or nearly all of the responding states plan to provide districts receiving ARRA SIG funds with technical support (46 states) and increased monitoring and data review (44 states). The vast majority of responding states also plan to offer these ARRA SIG districts information on best practices for low-performing schools (39 states), guidance on selecting school intervention models (34 states), and professional development for school leadership (32 states). Half of the respondents (23 states) reported that their state would provide ARRA SIG districts with teacher professional development" (McMurrer, Dietz, & Stark Rentner, 2011).

The states included in this report exemplify some of the above processes in their state systems of support for SIG schools, but few do all. Most SEAs that encourage or require the use of LTPs issued an RFP to vendors to create a pre-ferred or approved provider list. Many of those SEAs also sponsored online webinars or vendor fairs to allow districts and vendors to meet each other. Few SEAs provided assistance to districts during the selection/hiring process of the LTP. Based on the varied results of the LTPs from year one, some states provided greater facilitation and guidance to districts during the matching process in year two. Most states distributed research or held technical assistance training sessions throughout the year, but few followed up to see if implementation was making its way into the field.

Many LTPs desire strong involvement of the state. The majority of LTPs surveyed for this research want to be held accountable for results, and they understand that an involved state will be more responsive to the needs of both the district and schools. SEAs with open relationships with the LTPs allow more frequent and honest communication about the realities of the field. For example, if district staff continually undermines an LTP's authority, the state can become involved more quickly and address issues before they escalate. One LTP cited a case where the SEA had the willpower to maintain direction and enforce changes that were needed, "When the district wanted to completely change course, the state said it would take back the money" (LTP surveys/interviews).

Nearly all LTPs and states surveyed for this report believe that completing strong quarterly reports and regular monitoring of the implementation by the SEA are helpful and important pieces of the improvement process.[21] In Massachusetts, the state focuses on assisting and monitoring the districts while they build capacity to turnaround their low-performing schools. Districts are held accountable through an annual renewal process that takes into account three types of data:

1. Progress on implementing their stated benchmarks;

2. Evidence that the data from monitoring site visits informs ongoing implementation; and,

3. Evidence that measurable annual goals are being met and, if not, the reasons for underperformance are identified and addressed (SEA surveys/interviews).

Districts are assessed a minimum of three times annually:

1. Fall/winter—To assess progress on the implementation of the benchmarks specified in the improvement plan;

2. Winter/spring—Official 2.5 day monitoring site visit executed by a third party to report on progress and offer a debriefing session with school leadership; and,

3. Spring/early summer—Application renewal reports on progress, plan changes, and budget revisions (SEA surveys/interviews).

In Virginia, the SEA created a more involved state role when it became clear that LTPs, districts, and schools were all figuring out how to successfully do this work at the same time. As a result, the Commonwealth sponsors a series of trainings, webinars, conference calls, site visits, and technical assistance sessions. Attendance of the LTP, the district liaison, and the school principal is required. LTPs report that attending trainings with the district and school staff is helpful and ensures that everyone is on the same page. In addition to the training sessions,

> *[Virginia also] developed a new position to support the improvement efforts. Five state facilitators were hired to act as the main liaisons between the [districts] and the state. The state facilitators monitor progress and are able to problem solve with the local teams as issues arise.*
>
> *The state facilitators are also able to share common issues across the state. Since [the Office of School Improvement] learns about issues as they emerge, staff members are then able to resolve any problems in a timely manner. The facilitators provide [the Commonwealth] an on-the-ground perspective that allows for more frequent communication and stronger support services.* (Corbett, 2011)

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[21]44 states surveyed for the CEP report also reported that they provide additional monitoring and data review for school districts receiving SIG funds; 13 states provide additional monitoring and data review for school districts not receiving SIG funds (McMurrer, Dietz, & Stark Rentner, 2011).

In Hawaii, Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) take on a role between the state and the district and "[determine] which restructuring option will be used; [direct] and [manage] the school's restructuring efforts; [make] leadership decisions for the school, including personnel decisions; [manage] all curriculum and instruction for the school; and [exercise] budgetary authority over all school funds and resources, except funds designated to the restructuring provider" (Hess & Squire, 2009).

In Illinois, the continuation grant application process (how districts request SIG funds for year two) is the primary accountability vehicle. If a partnership does not demonstrate results, the district must propose solutions to reach the expected improvements, either through a revised plan, or with a new LTP. "There's an MOU with each LTP and each district that specifies accountability measures and expectations. Either party could terminate that agreement at any time. The accountability rests with the districts, so they need to make the decision to move in a different direction. But it's important to realize that if you bring in a new LTP in year two, you're essentially starting the process again" (SEA surveys/interviews).

Lessons Learned by States

Lack of Control—SEAs are unable to control the day-to-day happenings in the district and are unable to "force" some of the changes that are needed. Based on the comments of LTP staff, they find it helpful if states are more involved at the onset of the SIG process, (i.e., RFP review, matching, contract negotiations, adding conditions to grant award) so the states have more control over the process in the long run as well.

State Facilitators—If using state facilitators or liaisons, experiences from year one imply that it is important to make sure those state liaisons follow through on their role and have the right personality and skill set to support both the LTP and the district. This is likely a new role for the facilitators/liaisons, and training on data analysis, acting as a critical friend, fidelity of implementation, and monitoring progress is necessary.

Recommendations for States

- Be flexible and understand that despite the best intentions, the state role or state-initiated processes might need to change throughout the improvement process.

- Clearly define roles, responsibilities, requirements, and expectations early on in the process.

- Shift the state role from one of compliance only to one of support and compliance.

- Maintain regular contact with the LTPs and the districts and address concerns as they arise.

- Hold the districts accountable for their actions (i.e., make sure that the district creates conditions that allow the LTP to make the necessary changes).

The District Role

States allocate SIG funds to the district, and the district is then responsible for spending those funds on the turnaround efforts. Based on the fund distribution process and the political strength in many district offices, districts have the ability to help or hurt the improvement process. One LTP states, "Districts operate like a cascade from the state's approach" (LTP surveys/interviews). In effect, the states must set the right tone and balance for the districts to replicate, while districts are responsible for overseeing and supporting implementation. Several LTPs recommend holding a meeting early on to clearly define roles and expectations of each entity involved in the process.

> *The most difficult situations occur when districts are completely hands-off, that is, it's all [the LTP's] responsibility. But, the school is a reflection of the districts' systems and processes. The districts need to be involved, but the other extreme is bad too. [For example, when a district is] overly involved in the day-to-day, and they don't give the school or provider the room to form that trust or relationship, or if there are so many district meetings that the provider can't schedule their own meetings, it can strangle relationships.* (LTP surveys/interviews)

Numerous LTPs surveyed do not want to make some of the tough decisions, such as firing a principal, and many do not think they should make those decisions. In effect, the district and the LTP must develop a collaborative and open relationship to make these decisions together. The LTPs analyze and monitor the realities and needs of the school and the district, but the district leaders must be the ones to implement any of the district-wide recommendations.

Districts are often reluctant to make the bigger, more structural changes. This is most frequently seen in larger school districts that only have one or two SIG-funded schools. One SEA staffer notes smaller districts are sometimes more likely to make the process or structural changes because there are fewer entrenched interests, there is less controversy over a low-performing school, and there are fewer people to include in the "blame game" of low-performance (Morando Rhim, 2011; SEA surveys/interviews). District changes that are necessary to support the turnaround work range from allowing the SIG schools to adjust their daily schedule or calendar to allowing SIG schools priority in filling teacher vacancies each year (i.e., no forced placement of low-performing teachers from other schools) (Kowal, Ayscue Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). Districts must also allow the "school autonomy from district practices to free up needed time to focus on implementation [of the] plan" (LTP surveys/interviews).

> *"In all districts, the work is not transformational, but transitional. There is no willingness to do transformational change; there is a willingness to do what has always been done better."*
>
> State Education Agency Staff Member

Several LTPs agree that it is sometimes difficult to get a response from the district, and better communication occurs when districts have a clearly defined

turnaround office, manager, or liaison (in one state this position is called the Internal Lead Partner). Experiences in year one demonstrate that districts should appoint someone to be in charge of the efforts and ensure that the person in this position has the authority to make decisions and make things happen. The commitment to change and to implement recommendations must happen from the top down.

Lessons Learned by LTPs and Districts[22]

Awareness—Districts are ultimately accountable for student performance, so district leaders must be involved in the turnaround process from the beginning. District leaders must educate themselves about the requirements of the federal models, the state requirements, the LTP model, and the realities of the school.

Set the Precedent—Many LTPs struggle to establish positive relationships with district offices. While LTPs are integral partners in the turnaround efforts, they often feel like an add-on program or a consultant that recommends changes that are never implemented. Comments from SEA staff reflect that some district staff members, including superintendents, may undermine the LTP's or the district liaison's authority. Several state leaders and LTP staff suggest district leaders should embrace the culture of change, collaboration, and commitment to improvement with the rest of the district staff and empower the district liaison (or the turnaround office) with autonomy and authority.

Recommendations for Districts:

- Appoint a mid- to high-level administrator to lead the district's turnaround office or act as the district liaison in a smaller district.

- Empower the district liaison or turnaround office to rapidly make decisions regarding the SIG-funded schools.

- Understand that district systems and processes may require changes and improvements as well.[23]

- Strongly consider implementing changes recommended by the LTP.

- Consider scaling up some promising practices or processes used in the SIG schools to the rest of the district[24] (Virginia Department of Education, 2011).

- Hold the LTP accountable for results by regularly monitoring progress against defined benchmarks, goals, and timelines, but do not restrict implementation at the school level.

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[22]Informal conversations during the provision of technical assistance to districts and states helped form this set of lessons learned and recommendations.

[23]District changes could include streamlining the hiring and placement process for teachers, systematically collecting and analyzing student performance and school culture data, ensuring that district offices are aligned, or limiting repetitive paperwork across district divisions.

[24]For example, Superintendents in Virginia are scaling up the following practices initiated in the SIG-funded schools in year one: adjusting hiring and mentoring programs, using the transformation indicators across the district, holding more structured meetings that focus on student achievement, and increasing the use of instructional rounds which provide constructive feedback to principals and teachers more often.

■ The superintendent should regularly communicate information about the turnaround process and the SIG requirements to the local school board.

Conclusion

As LTP and SEA staff reflect on the first year of the revised SIG program, four issues were frequently discussed and cause on-going concern: the supply of high-quality LTPs, the need for additional research on LTPs, how to sustain improvements, and the implications of federal policy and practices.

Supply

Both LTP and SEA staff cited concerns with the quantity and quality of LTPs. SEAs recognize the need for additional capacity in persistently low-achieving schools and districts and most acknowledge that state takeover is not a feasible option for a variety of reasons, mostly related to past failures and capacity shortages with the SEA itself. States want to use and encourage the use of LTPs, but the supply of LTPs that are ready to take on persistently low-achieving schools is severely lacking. One state official comments: "When one district selected the Restart model without yet identifying the vendor, they put the contract out to bid and received very few proposals" (SEA surveys/interviews). Feedback from the states aligns with findings from other recent publications, as a report from Colorado found that, "Ultimately, the turnaround partners on the state-approved list tend to provide assistance services, rather than whole-school governance for turnaround schools" (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011). The report continues,

> *While Colorado worked actively to assist districts and schools in selecting external partners to help implement turnaround plans, the organizations that responded to and were approved through the state's selection process are primarily "assistance providers"—groups that work alongside school and district staff on discrete areas of school improvement, such as improving instructional approaches, aligning curricular programs, implementing new technologies, or training teachers and staff. None of the providers on the state's approved list are managing the full operations of schools, the type of arrangement envisioned under the "restart" improvement model in both Colorado and federal law.* (Kowal & Ableidinger)

While states must more clearly define the LTP role in an RFP and only approve operators who understand that role, the filed will likely remain small with a large-scale effort to incubate LTPs. Until national organizations begin the incubation of LTPs, states may need to incubate on their own. One state is taking on the challenge and recognizes, "[We] need to plan a more active role in attracting and incubating [providers]. The supply and quality has been a challenge—there are too few [providers] with a demonstrated track record. We have a Race to the Top initiative to do this and have begun the early planning to develop this pipeline of [providers]" (SEA surveys/interviews).

Some LTPs, who believe their partnerships in year one produced strong results, also want to see the entire marketplace's quality improve.[25] One LTP states, the

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[25]Anecdotal analysis by LTPs of year one results with SIG schools and of past similar improvement efforts.

"hardest thing for us to compete against is not other providers [who are] the more successful people in the space, as it makes the field as a whole better, [and it helps] legitimize the field. But, I don't like losing to [providers who offer only] status quo solutions. [This type of LTP says] 'We'll help you do better, but we won't change much'" (LTP surveys/interviews).

Recommendations for the Field

- States should ensure that LTP RFPs seek providers who are ready to guide comprehensive whole school improvement, which may include district improvements as well.

- States should assist districts in the selection/hiring process so that they choose LTPs who will develop capacity and make the needed changes.

- LTPs could develop more diversity within the LTP marketplace (i.e., create a model that works well in rural schools).

- Individual states, consortiums of states, or non-profit organizations could launch a formal incubation of LTP providers.[26]

- Strong LTP providers could develop a set of best practices and publicize a list of the providers who abide by those practices and ideals.

- A non-profit organization could build a training program or residency for organizations who want to become LTPs.[27]

- An oversight body could certify LTPs, through a rigorous review and evaluation process, to provide states and districts with guidance and to hold willing LTPs accountable (i.e., an accreditation).

Need for Research

While some lessons can be learned from studying how LTPs have tackled SIG-funded school improvement efforts to date and how states and districts have selected and supported those LTPs, it is important to note that there is desperately little information about which providers—and which matches between providers and schools—actually contribute to drastic and sustainable student success.

At this point, there is a severe lack of information about the performance of the LTPs that do exist. Some LTPs have their own data on successful past improvement efforts, but none have enough comparable and objective information about their success with schools and students, under the revised federal SIG program, to inform states', districts', and schools' choices.

USED's Institute for Education Sciences is currently researching the SIG program through three different studies, including:

- A multi-year review of case study states' SIG implementation;

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[26]Such organizations like NewSchools Venture Fund and the Charter School Growth Fund are actively working to incubate, support, and fund organizations that may take on the LTP role.
[27]Such efforts could be modeled on the residency programs at Building Excellent Schools, New Schools for New Orleans, or Urban Teacher Residency United.

- An impact study of Recovery Act programs, including SIG; and

- An evaluation of Race to the Top and SIG implementation (United States General Accountability Office, 2011).

While these studies will provide some information on the use of LTPs and how to best support LTP partnerships, additional research that focuses specifically on the LTP field is needed as well.

Recommendations for the Field

- To assist the research process, it would be useful if USED, states, and LTPs collect pre- and post- data on student performance, school culture, teacher quality, and other indicators of "successful" schools.[28]

- USED or a private entity could fund a comprehensive scientific, multi-year study to evaluate LTP partnerships, the LTPs themselves, and which practices and processes work in these schools.

Sustainability

"What's going to happen when the funds dry up?" is a common question from both LTPs and states. In order to ensure that improvements are sustainable after the SIG-funded supports decrease in intensity or are removed altogether, the current SIG-program emphasizes capacity building at all levels (NASTID, 2010). In effect, states, districts, and LTPs recognize that capacity must be built throughout the system, and improved practices and processes must become so deeply embedded that they become the new status quo.

Some LTPs also recognize and accept that they are essentially working themselves out of jobs. One provider is actively developing "a step down model using Title I funds to provide some support without letting [the SIG schools] go entirely. While two-three years is the goal for improvement, more time is necessary to make sure that systems and processes are embedded. Basically, 'how can we make the model people proof?'" (LTP surveys/interviews)

Districts and states must also maintain focus on this subset of schools after the LTPs leave. This focus includes ensuring that former SIG schools continue to receive specialized support and critical autonomies, and principals and staff trained at the schools remain there for a few years after the SIG period ends, so that altered practices become embedded throughout the system to the point that a change in leadership does not derail the improvement or reverse the growth.

Both LTPs and states cited that local school boards sometimes inhibit the improvement process. "Since [SIG] is a three-year grant period, new board members will likely be elected or appointed [over the course of the grant], and

[28]For the first time, USED requires annual reporting on interim performance data, including a set of leading indicators of success. USED has the discretion to release this data to researchers who can analyze and use it to influence next-generation efforts. The nine required leading indicators include: number of minutes within school year; student participation rate on state assessments; dropout rate; student attendance rate; teacher attendance rate; number and percent of students completing advanced coursework; discipline incidents; truancy; and distribution of teachers on district evaluation system.

it is important that the boards don't change course or block the efforts. It would be helpful to have additional assurances around maintaining the integrity of the board" (SEA surveys/interviews). Some states' education chiefs already have the ability to remove board members who have contributed to a district's low performance if schools reach certain performance designations.[29] One state staff member suggests that it would be helpful if chiefs could override local elections or appointments in SIG-funded schools as well.

Recommendations for States, Districts, and LTPs

- Districts and states should scale up and embed promising practices and processes, that could be beneficial to other schools and districts, as they are implemented and shown to be effective in the SIG schools.

- LTPs should actively develop a step-down plan for SIG schools to provide necessary services but at a decreased cost.

- Districts should plan for the decreasing LTP support from the onset of the initiative.

- Improvement efforts should focus on increasing capacity throughout the system (i.e., LTP leads the effort in year one, but acts as an advisor by year three).

- Work together to identify which critical elements of the turnaround model require ongoing support and funding, and identify recurring funds that could be reallocated to support that work.

- States could pursue giving the state education chiefs the authority to override local school board elections or appointments for SIG-funded schools.

Federal Policy

The delayed timeline that includes USED approving the state applications, states releasing the list of eligible schools and the state application, and districts receiving approval, receiving funds, and negotiating contracts with the LTPs causes frustration and concern for both states and LTPs. In effect, LTPs are often selected after a district has created and received approval for an improvement plan and are not hired until early- or mid-summer. In year two (2011-12), USED moved up the deadline for state SIG applications from February to December and recognizes that the timeline continues to be a concern (United States General Accountability Office, 2011).

One LTP also cites frustration with the federal requirement related to removing or shifting staff, due to the lack of adequate teachers to replace removed staff within some communities. First, "the challenge isn't necessarily poor teachers and poor leaders in a school, but poor teachers and poor leaders from the community as a whole. To meet the federal requirements, [the district] shuffles around the lemons because there's no one else. There might not be anyone much better to pick from, but we should have a few months to really address the needs, and see if there's a better successor [to replace the principal] in the

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[29]See the Children's First Act of 2009 in Mississippi for an example of a state that passed legislation to override (and dismantle) local school boards with persistently low-performing schools.

building already" (LTP surveys/interviews). This LTP recommends that providers be allowed to take an "initial stab to try to do what you can with those already there. Then make the tougher decisions if they're necessary." This would require additional flexibility or a waiver from the federal requirements to only remove staff or the principal if they are proven ineffective, unwilling, or unable to improve within a specified timeline.

Recommendations for USED and States

■ While USED is making some progress in improving the timeline, the entire application and approval process should be shortened as much as possible, at both the state and federal level, to allow LTPs to begin evaluation and planning work in the spring before school-year implementation[30] (United States General Accountability Office, 2011).

■ To shorten the state timeline, states requiring LTPs should not ask for complete implementation plans during the SIG application process, but should instead request information on the district's structure and process for selecting an LTP and how they plan to support the improvement effort. Once hired, LTPs should then complete the diagnostic/needs assessment and develop the implementation plan with the school and district. The state could then review the complete implementation plan, goals, and legal documents that guide the partnership and make suggestions as needed.

Concluding Thoughts

The LTP concept remains a promising model in the school improvement field. The federal requirements are extensive and can seem overwhelming, yet many of the required indicators and the conditions which allow the implementation of those indicators are commonly present in high-performing high-poverty schools. The models must be implemented with fidelity and throughout the entire system. Otherwise, "it acts like the old comprehensive school reform model, it looks like the old comprehensive school reform model, it is being operationalized as the old comprehensive school reform model, and more than likely, it will have limited results like the old comprehensive school reform model" (SEA surveys/interviews).

LTPs, states, and districts learned a great deal in year one of the revised SIG program, but there are many areas that require further improvement.

■ The supply of high quality LTPs remains one of the most pressing issues and must be addressed from a variety of angles (including both quantity and quality).

■ All entities involved in a SIG improvement effort should increase communication and collaboration. Over-communicating seems necessary and will help eliminate some of the political barriers that develop while

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[30]For example, if the grant is approved for implementation during the 2011-12 school year, the LTP should be selected in Spring 2011, and the needs assessment process should begin in May-June 2011. This would allow the LTP to observe the realities of the current school and would likely result in a stronger implementation plan and more efficient use of the summer months.

implementing some of the more controversial requirements of the SIG improvement models.

- Clarify the variety of external partners who can contribute to an improvement effort, and reinforce the concept of LTPs as comprehensive improvement partners. "LTPs are not an add-on, they are the reform effort" (LTP surveys/interviews).

- Changing the status quo will be uncomfortable and requires change at every level, including the school, the community, the district, the state, and the federal government.

LTPs and states must continue to share experiences with each other about the SIG program until comprehensive scientific research which evaluates both the validity of the models and the quality of various LTPs is complete. Trying to figure out how to do this work alone does not use federal dollars efficiently, legitimize the LTP field, nor does it provide students, who so desperately need help, with the best chance of success.

Resources

Primary Data Collection:

Interview and/or surveys were collected from the following Lead Turnaround Partner providers:[31]

- Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL)
- America's Choice
- Cambridge Education
- EdisonLearning
- Learning Point Associates/AIR
- Pearson School Achievement Services
- WestEd

Telephone interviews, email correspondence, and/or surveys were collected from the following state education agencies:

- Colorado Department of Education
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Indiana Department of Education
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Virginia Department of Education

Additional State Education Agency References & Resources:

Colorado Department of Education (CDE)
- List of Approved Providers, 2010: http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/20100122approvedproviders.pdf
- RFI for Education Service Providers: http://www.cde.state.co.us/turnaround/downloads/Turnaround_RFI-FINAL_Version_III.pdf
- Turnaround Plan: http://www.cde.state.co.us/turnaround/cde_turnaroundplan_home.htm

Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE)
- Framework for School Improvement, Overview, Revised Jan. 2010: http://doe.k12.hi.us/nclb/educators/100401FramewordForSchoolImprovement100129.pdf
- NCLB - Educator Info Homepage: http://doe.k12.hi.us/nclb/educators/index.htm
- Title I Homepage: http://doe.k12.hi.us/nclb/educators/schoolimprovementgrantapplication/index.htm

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- Approved Vendor List, 2011: http://isbe.net/apl/default
- Innovation & Improvement Homepage: http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/improvement_process.htm

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[31]Additional LTP documents and marketing materials were also reviewed of all LTPs included in the LTP Profile section.

- Lead/Support Partner Status, 2010: http://isbe.net/apl/pdf/partner_application%20_final.pdf
- RFSP Entities Seeking Illinois State Board of Education Approval

Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)
- Office of Title I Homepage: http://www.doe.in.gov/TitleI/
- RFI for Lead Partners for Probationary Status Schools, Jun. 2011: http://www.doe.in.gov/turnaround/docs/Lead-Partner.pdf
- RFP for Turnaround School Operators, 2010-11: http://www.doe.in.gov/turnaround/docs/rfp_idoe_turnaround_school_operator_11-19-final.pdf
- School Turnaround Homepage: http://www.doe.in.gov/turnaround/
- Turnaround School Operator Q & A, Nov 19, 2010: http://www.doe.in.gov/turnaround/docs/school_turnaround_operator_q_and_a_november_19-final.pdf

New York State Education Department (NYSED)
- Persistently Low-Achieving Schools Homepage: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/pla/
- RFI for School Turnaround Service Provider: http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/docs/rfi/schoolturnaround.html
- RFP School Innovation Fund: New Schools/School Redesign Partnerships (#TA-05): http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/ta-05/

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE)
- Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness: http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/school/process.html?section=essential
- External Provider Pipeline Toolkit (for districts), Aug. 2010: http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/framework/level4/PipelineToolkit.pdf
- Framework for District Accountability and Assistance: http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/framework/default.html
- FAQ's for Level 4 Schools, June 2010: http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/framework/level4/faq.pdf
- RFP for Priority Partners for Turnaround (11RFQAPAMV1): http://www.comm-pass.com (password protected)
- School Redesign Grant Information: http://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/turnaround/

Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)
Approved Whole School Reform Providers:
- Phase I—http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/RTTT_whole_school.pdf
- Phase II—http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/PhaseIIWS.pdf
- Overview of TN Turnaround Efforts, 2010 http://www.tn.gov/firsttothetop/documents/SSC_Low_Performing_Schools.pdf
- RFP for Whole School Reform Vendors 2010-11: http://www.tnscore.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/RTTT-Whole-School-Phase-II-6-29-10.pdf

- ▪ "School Improvement Grant Information for Tier 1, Tier 2 and Renewal Schools," Powerpoint Presentation, Tennessee Department of Education, May 19, 2010.
- ▪ School Turnaround Homepage, Under First to the Top (RTTT): http://www.tn.gov/firsttothetop/programs-turnaround.html
- ▪ Title I Homepage: http://www.tennessee.gov/education/fedprog/fpsch-limprove.shtml

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

- ▪ Office of School Improvement, 1003(g) Title I Resources: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/index.shtml
- ▪ RFP for Lead Turnaround Partners, 2010: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/tier_1-2/meeting_apr_2010/rfp_low_achieving_schools.pdf
- ▪ *Virginia's Lead Turnaround Partner Initiative*, Virginia Department of Education. April 7, 2010: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/index.shtml

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Appendix

LTP Profiles

This list of profiles is not inclusive of all LTP providers working in the turn-around field, nor does it address the quality of services available by each vendor. Extended profiles contain self-reported data.

Academy for Urban School Leadership
Headquarters: Chicago, IL
Website: http://www.ausl-chicago.org/

American Institute for Research (AIR)
LTP Division Name: Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of AIR
Headquarters: DC
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 8
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 7*
Location (states) of SIG-funded LTP partnerships: Illinois, Michigan & Missouri
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 10+
# of LTP-division employees: 25
Website: http://www.air.org/focus-area/education/?id=110
*NOTE: Also consulting with 3 SIG-restart schools.

Cambridge Education LLC
LTP Division Name: N/A
Headquarters: Westwood, MA
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 7
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 9
Location of LTP partnerships: Michigan, Minnesota & Virginia
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 15
# of LTP-division employees: 41
Website: http://www.camb-ed-us.com

Cambium Learning Group
Headquarters: Dallas, TX
Website: http://www.cambiumlearning.com

Center for Collaborative Education (CCE)
LTP Division Name: N/A
Headquarters: Boston, MA
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 16
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 10
Location of LTP partnerships: Massachusetts
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 12
# of LTP-division employees: 23
Other Information: Currently working in New England and Los Angeles
Website: http://www.cce.org

EdisonLearning, Inc.

LTP Division Name: N/A
Headquarters: New York, NY
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 65*
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 67*
Location of LTP partnerships: Delaware, Hawaii, Michigan, South Carolina & Virginia
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 11
# of LTP-division employees: 74
Website: www.edisonlearning.com
*NOTE: For each school year listed, only 3 receive(d) SIG-funding; however, all receive(d) the same type of services.

Evans Newton, Inc. (ENI)

LTP Division Name: N/A
Headquarters: Scottsdale, AZ
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 2
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 2
Location of SIG-funded LTP partnerships: Colorado & Kansas
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 23
# of LTP-division employees: 85
Website: www.evansnewton.com

Mosaica Education, Inc.

LTP Division Name: Mosaica Turnaround Partners
Headquarters: Atlanta, GA
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 5
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 8
Location (states) of LTP partnerships: Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania & Wisconsin
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 11
# of LTP-division employees: 60
Website: www.educationturnarounds.com

Pearson Education

*LTP Division Name: School Achievement Services (SAS)**
Headquarters: Washington, DC
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 24
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 30
Location (states) of LTP partnerships: Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Nevada, Texas, Virginia
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 13
# of LTP-division employees: 305
Website: http://www.pearsoned.com/prek-12-education/school-transformation/
*NOTE: Pearson purchased America's Choice in 2010 and AC contributes the largest part of SAS.

Success for All
Headquarters: Baltimore, MD
Website: http://www.successforall.net/Turnaround/turnaround.html

Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS)
LTP Division Name: Talent Development Secondary
Headquarters: Baltimore, MD
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 19
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 31
Location (states) of LTP partnerships: California, DC, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, South Carolina, Texas & Wisconsin
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 17
# of LTP-division employees: 100
Website: www.talentdevelopmentsecondary.com
Other information: Grades 5-12; includes formal partnerships with City Year and Communities in Schools (Diplomas Now).

LTP Division Name: Diplomas Now
Headquarters: Baltimore, MD
Geographic Focus: National
# of SIG-funded LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 5
Locations of LTP partnerships: DC, Illinois & Massachusetts
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 4 years
# of LTP-division employees: 250 (over the three partner organizations)
Other Information: Diplomas Now is a unique partnership among three organizations—Johns Hopkins Talent Development Secondary, City Year, and Communities In Schools.
Website: www.diplomasnow.org

WestEd
LTP Division Name: School Turnaround Center
Headquarters: San Francisco, CA
Geographic Focus: National
# of LTP partnership schools (2010-11): 8*
# of LTP partnership schools (2011-12): 15*
Location of LTP partnerships: California, Colorado, & Nebraska
# of years doing comprehensive turnaround-type work: 4
# of LTP-division employees: 12
Website: www.wested.org/schoolturnaroundcenter
*NOTE: 4 of these schools are low-performing non-SIG high schools.

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School Improvement Grants
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www.centerii.org