



The Turnaround Challenge

Supplement to the Main Report

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

Prepared through a grant from
the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute *(project organizer)*

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18 Tremont Street, Suite 930, Boston, MA 02108
617-778-1500 Fax: 617-778-1505

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Supplement to the Main Report

The Turnaround Challenge

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

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

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Authors

Andrew Calkins is Senior Vice President of Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. He was formerly the Executive Director of the non-profit organization Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., and a senior editor and project manager at Scholastic Inc.

William Guenther is Founder and President of Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. He is also the founder of Mass Insight Corporation, a Boston-based research and consulting firm that seeks to keep Massachusetts and its businesses and institutions globally competitive.

Grace Belfiore is Senior Editor at Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. The holder of a doctorate in education history from Oxford University, she has worked as a researcher and editor in standards-based education in both the U.S. and U.K., and was formerly the director of Pergamon Open Learning, a self-paced learning division at Reed Elsevier Publishers.

Dave Lash is a strategy and innovation consultant with expertise in designing and implementing new initiatives. Principal of Dave Lash & Company (www.davelash.com), he helped develop the conceptual models and visual orientation of this report.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute

Senior management and project-related staff:

William Guenther, President
Andrew Calkins, Senior Vice President
Melanie Winklosky, Vice President, Development & Operations
Alison Fraser, Great Schools Campaign Director
Joanna Manikas, Design and Production Director
Grace Belfiore, Senior Editor
Charles Chieppo, Senior Writer
Chris Tracey, Researcher/Writer
Deb Abbott, Finance Manager
Julie Corbett, Program Associate
Elizabeth Hiles, Research Associate
Linda Neri Watts, Contributing Editor
Donna Michitson, Graphic Designer
Danielle Stein, [former] Program Mgr., Building Blocks

Project and editorial consultants:

Ethan Cancell, Brockton Public Schools
Bryan Hassel, Public Impact, Inc.
Irving Hamer, Millennium Group
Richard O'Neill, Renaissance School Services
Adam Kernan-Schloss, KSA-Plus
Jennifer Vranek, Education First Consulting
Anne Lewis

Project partners:

Michael Cohen and Matt Gandal, Achieve Inc.

National project advisors and focus group participants:

Richard Elmore, Harvard University
Tokes Fashola, American Institutes for Research
Lauren Rhim, University of Maryland
Douglas Sears, Boston University
Ken Wong, Brown University
Tim Knowles, University of Chicago
Barbara Byrd-Bennett, Cleveland State University
Vicki Phillips, [formerly] Portland, OR Public Schools
Kati Haycock, The Education Trust
Andrew Rotherham, Ed Sector
Richard Hess, American Enterprise Institute
Amy Starzynski, Holland & Knight
Scott Palmer, Holland & Knight
Ana Tilton, NewSchools Venture Fund
Renuka Kher, NewSchools Venture Fund
Anthony Cavanna, American Institutes for Research
Robin Lake, Center for Reinventing Education
Monica Byrn-Jimenez, UMass Boston
Brett Lane, Education Alliance at Brown University
Cheryl Almedia, Jobs for the Future
Celine Coggins, Rennie Center for Education Reform
David Farbman, Mass 2020
Jamie Gass, Pioneer Institute
Fred Carrigg, New Jersey Department of Education
Ron Peiffer, Maryland Department of Education
JoAnne Carter, Maryland Department of Education
Dane Linn, National Governors Association
Fritz Edelstein, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Julie Bell, National Conference of State Legislatures
Sunny Kristin, National Conference of State Legislatures

Massachusetts project advisors and focus group participants:

Juliane Dow, Massachusetts Department of Education
Lynda Foisy, Massachusetts Department of Education
Spencer Blasdale, Academy of the Pacific Rim, Boston
Sally Dias, Emmanuel College
Peggy Kemp, Fenway High School, Boston
Ken Klau, Massachusetts Department of Education
Matt Malone, Swampscott Public Schools
Earl Metzler, Sterling Middle School, Quincy
Paul Natola, Boston Public Schools
Basan Nembirkow, Brockton Public Schools
Kiki Papagiotis, Salem High School
Ann Southworth, Springfield Public Schools

Table of Contents, Supplement to the Main Report

INTRODUCTION

Drilling down: Closer analysis at the state, district, school, and student levels2

STATE EFFORTS

Profiles of Ten State Intervention Strategies for Under-Performing Schools

The upshot: mostly tentative steps, and more frustration than success

Introduction	6
Alabama	9
Arizona	11
California	13
Florida	15
Hawaii	17
Maryland	19
Massachusetts	21
Michigan	24
Ohio	26
Virginia	28

DISTRICT EFFORTS

The Turnaround Laboratories: Four Major Districts' Turnaround Strategies

Experiments in fundamental change

Introduction	32
Chicago's Renaissance 2010: A spectrum of autonomy-for-accountability options	34
Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone: Significant reform through central control and uniform design	42
New York's Children First: A districtwide empowerment strategy	48
Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model: The "thin management" theory, in practice	56

BENCHMARK SCHOOLS

Visualizing the Goal: HPHP Schools in Action

Lessons from high-performing, high-poverty high schools64

STUDENTS' CHALLENGES

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

Three colliding factors = a hurricane of challenges74

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Annotated bibliography of selected turnaround resources87

SCHOOL TURNAROUND R&D INITIATIVE PROFILE

Brief description of the larger turnaround initiative of which The Turnaround Challenge is a part94

Drilling Down on School Turnaround

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

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

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

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

— Researcher Ronald Brady

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction continued

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

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

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

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

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

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

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– *Writer Karin Chenoweth*

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

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

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

What’s Next: Operationalizing Comprehensive Turnaround

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

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

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

Mostly tentative steps, and more frustration than success

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Light-touch" Technical Assistance Is Not Enough

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Ten Sample States

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

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

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

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

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

State Intervention continued

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

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

States Must Prepare for Legal and Political Resistance

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

States Must Build Capacity and Increase Coherence

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

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

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

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

Alabama: Striving for Coherence

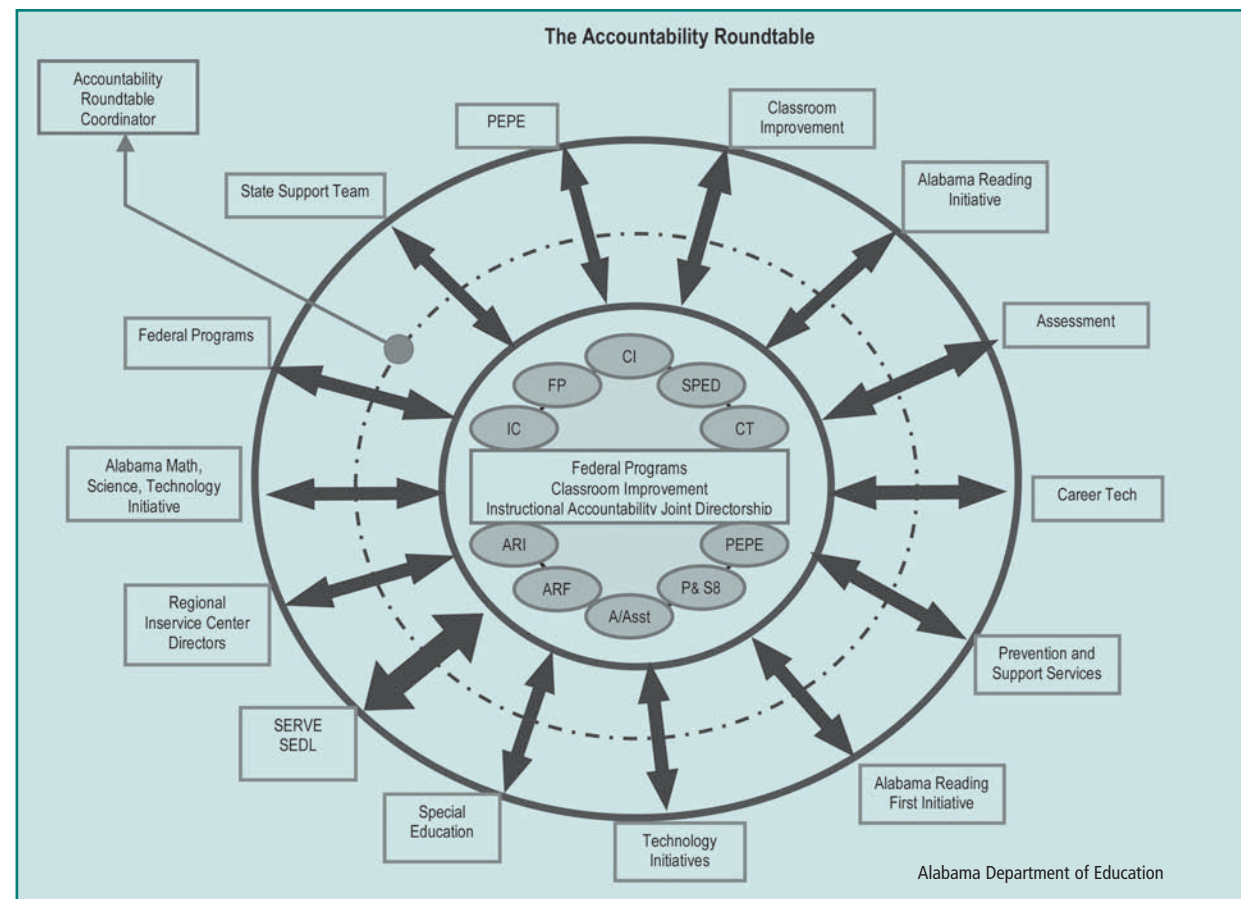
Alabama offers at least a partial lesson in how one state has attempted to end the “silo-izing” of its intervention effort, connecting it to multiple agencies that play support roles for schools and children. After less-than-successful efforts with failing school takeover, Alabama’s state education agency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

Traditionally Strong State Role in Education

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

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

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



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

The Accountability Roundtable

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arizona: Local Efforts, State Leverage

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

Strengthening State Control

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arizona continued

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

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

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

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

Arizona’s “Solutions Teams”

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

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

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

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

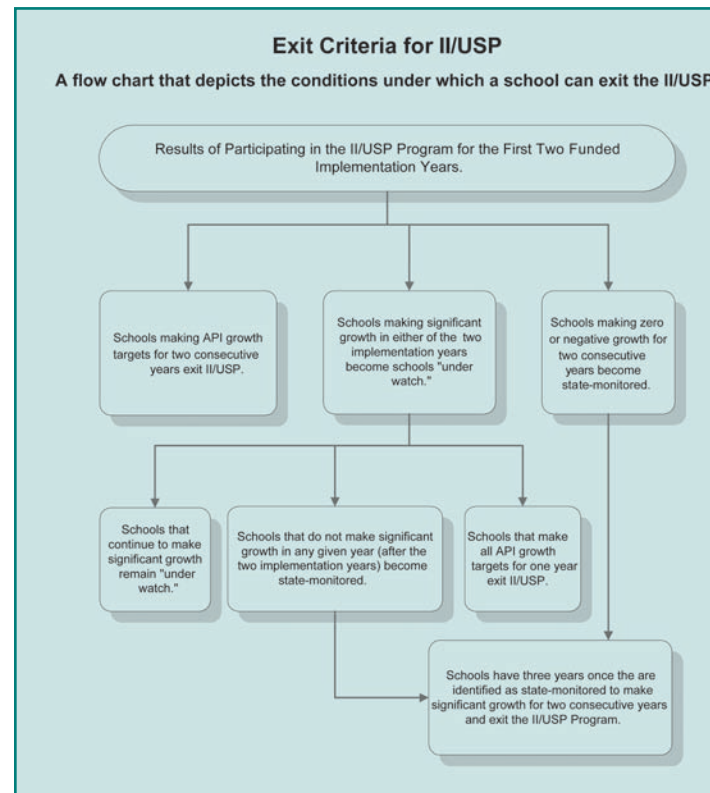
California: Uncertainty in the Face of Enormous Scale

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

The Original Plan

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

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



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

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

The Problem of Scale

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Florida: Pressuring Districts for More Proactive Turnaround

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

SWAT Teams for Failing Schools

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

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

State Imposed Requirements for Repeat "F" Schools Staffing

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

Oversight

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

Student Support

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

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

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

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

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

26 Requirements for Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hawaii: Experimenting with Outside Providers

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

Unique Circumstances, Unique Approach

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

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

The Plan has 3 goals:

IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH STANDARDS-BASED EDUCATION

1

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

PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

2

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

CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY

3

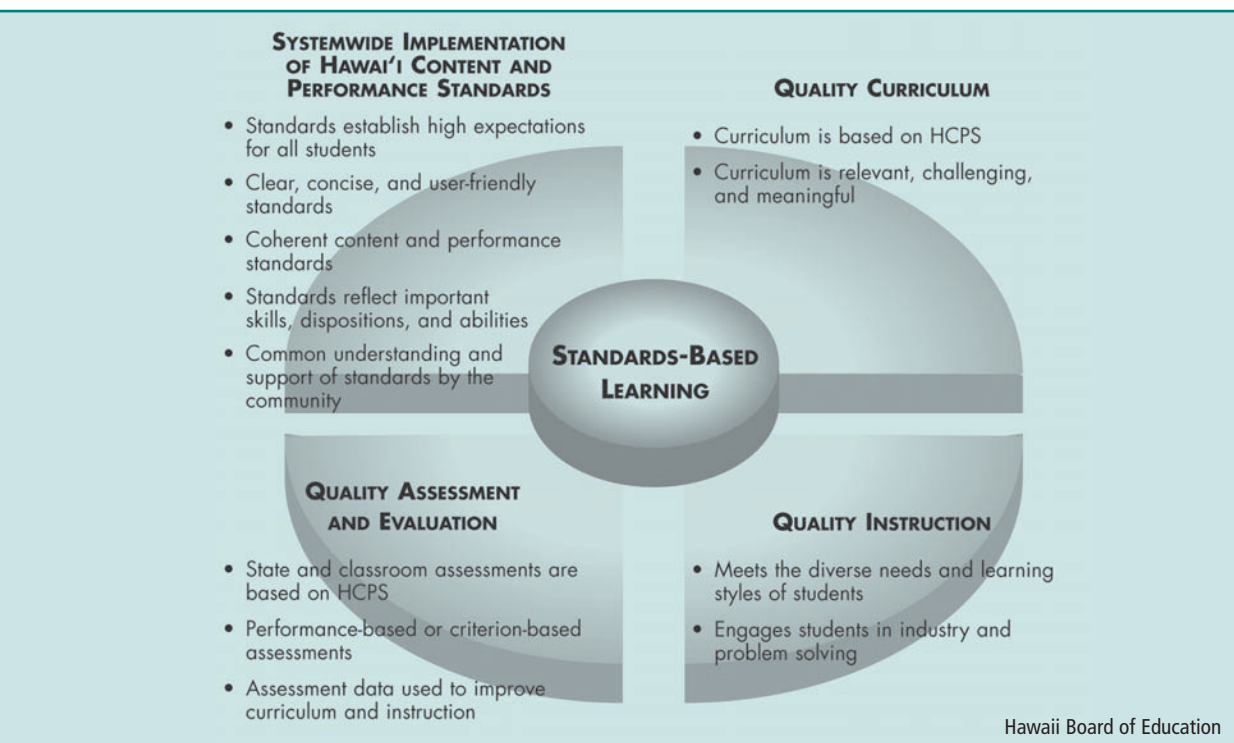
Schools engage in all aspects of standards-based education to ensure student learning. Integral to the process are frequent and varied balanced assessments that allow students to demonstrate their growing mastery of the standards. Standards-based education also raises the bar for the system. Everyone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

[Excerpt from Hawaii's plan for school intervention]

Hawaii continued

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

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



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

Concerns Over Implementation

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

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

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

Maryland: Caught in Political Cross-fire

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

An Activist Approach

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

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

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

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



Maryland State Department of Education

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

Maryland continued

Pressure to Weaken State Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Massachusetts: Seeking to Set Standards for Turnaround

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

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

Shortening the Review Process

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

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

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

A New Process, with New Requirements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Massachusetts’ Ten Essential Conditions

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

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

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

Michigan: Seeking Deeper Impact in Restructuring Schools

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

A Long Head Start

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

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

Coaches to Build Capacity

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

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

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

Local Empowerment vs. Requirements for Achievement

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

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

Michigan's Standards for School Improvement

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

Michigan Department of Education

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

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

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

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

Ohio: Moving Closer to Active Intervention

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

The District as Locus of School Intervention

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

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

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

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

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

Toward Greater State Intervention

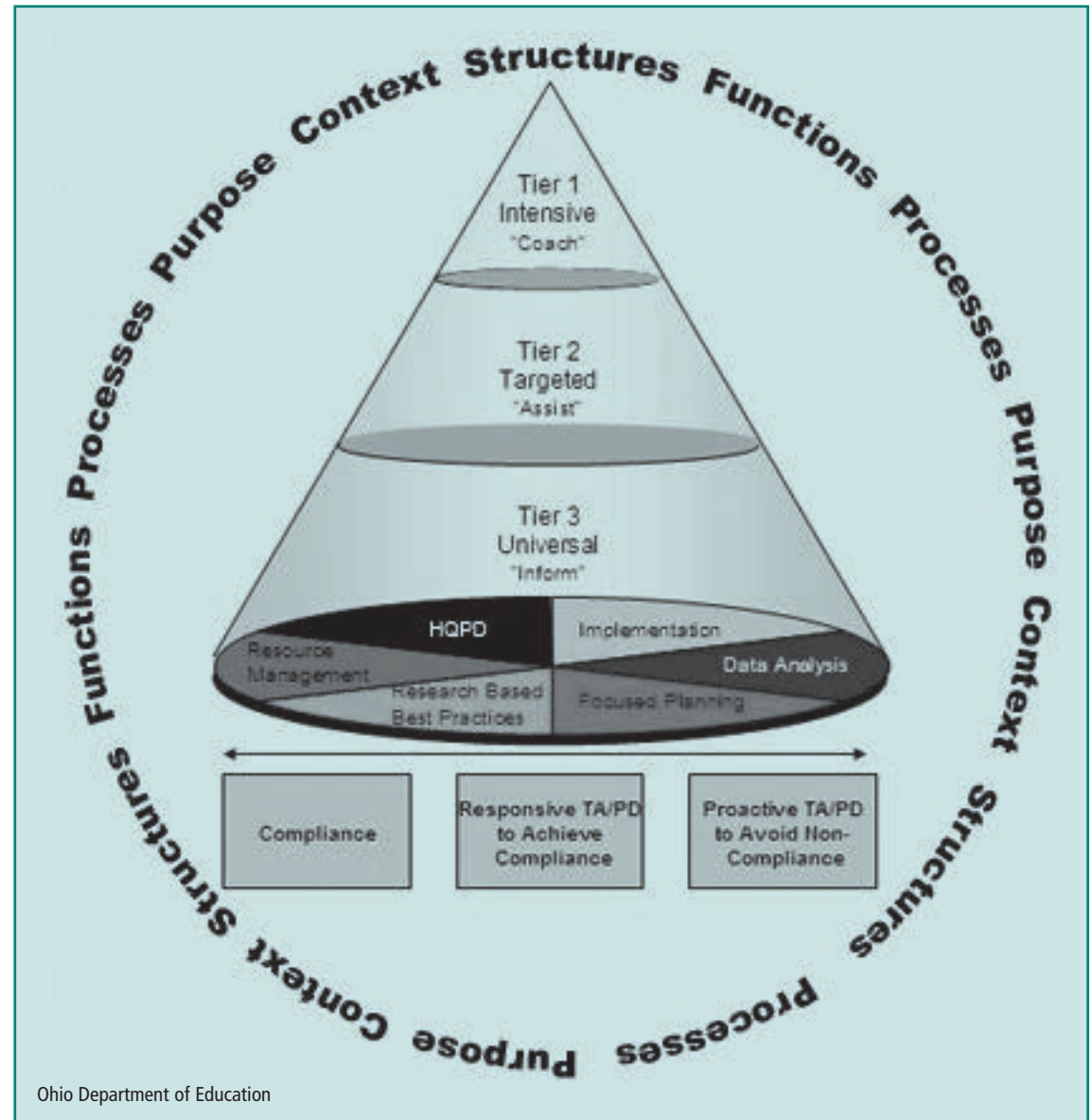
The recent activities of the Ohio legislature in this realm suggest the beginning of a break with the state’s “hands-off” approach. The legislature passed a provision requiring that districts be assigned an “academic distress commission” if they fail to make AYP *and* have been given the state’s lowest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

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

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

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

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



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

Virginia: Investing in Turnaround Leaders

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

Accreditation's Role in Accountability

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

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

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

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

The Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (VSTSP)

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

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

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

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

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

Recently, media reports have called the program's early effectiveness into question. One report noted the struggles of a particular Turnaround Specialist, and went on to add that 14 of the Program's first 21 principals oversaw schools that failed to meet AYP standards, based on 2005-2006 testing.⁵¹

Additionally, more than half the Turnaround Specialists have changed schools or left the Program, despite making three-year commitments. At least one school has closed under the leadership of a School Turnaround Specialist.⁵² The Program's administrators counter such criticism with research indicating that 12 of 18 schools whose administrator was in the first year of the Program experienced at least a 10 percent reduction in state assessment failure rates.⁵³ The VSTSP continues to receive a fair amount of attention nationally for its articulation of the specific skills school leaders need in order to manage turnaround effectively, and for the training it provides its Specialist cohorts. The experience of those leaders, once placed in turnaround schools, would seem to support *The Turnaround Challenge's* contention that good leadership, while a vital element in turnaround, is not sufficient without corollary changes to the operating context in which those leaders work.

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

- ³⁰Bowie, L. (2006, April 2). Schoolyard Brawl: City and state leaders stand on opposing sides of the debate over how to improve public education in Baltimore; Grasmick mingles politics, accountability. *Baltimore Sun*, p. 1A.
- ³¹For a detailed description of the state review panels, see the School District Accountability page on the Massachusetts Department of Education web site: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/panel/overview.html>
- ³²Tench, M. (2004, September 28). Ailing school eyed for state takeover. *The Boston Globe*, p.A1.
- ³³Schworm, P. (2005, October 30). Critics say state delayed as a school floundered: Despite legal powers, intervention is rare. *The Boston Globe*.
- ³⁴Massachusetts Department of Education. (2006, October 26). BOE votes to allow state to step in sooner to help low performing schools. Press Release. Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=3121>
- ³⁵See 603 CMR 2.03 for more detail on the new regulations.
- ³⁶For information on the budget requests, see http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/doe_budget/FY2008.html
- ³⁷By one estimate, about 70% of the schools nationwide identified as failing and facing No Child Left Behind sanctions are in just seven states: Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, California and Georgia. See 544 Michigan Schools Fail Federal Standards. *Detroit Free Press* (2006, August 25), p. 1.
- ³⁸Scott, C. (2004, November). Makeovers, facelifts, or reconstructive surgery: An early look at NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND restructuring in Michigan. Center on Education Policy. Available at http://www.cep-dc.org/fededprograms/Michigan_Nov2004.pdf
- ³⁹For more information on the ABCS coaching program , see <http://www.abcscoaches.org/aboutABCS.asp>
- ⁴⁰Scott, C., Kober, N., Stark Rentner, D., & Jennings, J. (2005, November). Hope but no miracle cures: Michigan's early restructuring lessons. Center on Education Policy. Available at <http://www.cep-dc.org/fededprograms/michiganNov2005/HopebutNoMiracleCure.pdf>
- ⁴¹For example, maintaining a strict restructuring plan approval process and stressing the value of coaching.
- ⁴²McRobbie, J. (1998, Spring). *Can state intervention spur academic turnaround?* WestEd. Available at http://www.wested.org/wested/papers/state_intervention/StateIntervention.html
- ⁴³Ohio Department of Education. *Ohio's Statewide System of School Improvement Support*. Available at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1105&ContentID=16293&Content=21407>
- ⁴⁴For a full interactive presentation explaining the structure and operation of the Ohio Statewide System of School Improvement Support, see <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=20339>. See also Council of Chief State School Officers. (2006). *State Support to Schools in Need of Improvement*. Consortium for School Improvement Policy Brief. Available at http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/SSSNI_FINAL.pdf
- ⁴⁵The new law is available at ORC Ann. 3302.10
- ⁴⁶8 VAC 20-131-280
- ⁴⁷Kastner, L. (2006, September 27). Last chance for a failing school; New principal, teachers part of mandate to improve Richmond's Chandler Middle. *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, p. A-1.
- ⁴⁸The Program was established with a \$1.5 million grant from the state. It later received funding of up to \$4 million from Microsoft, through the Partners in Education program. See National Model PR Newswire (2004, September 23). *Commonwealth of Virginia Will Expand Turnaround Specialist Program With Microsoft Partners in Learning; Multimillion Microsoft Investment Offers Ongoing Support and National Model*. According to then-Governor Warner, the Program is unique in its approach to promoting business-model approaches to change in an educational setting. See Santos, C. (2004, June 22).
- ⁴⁹For a full description of the cohorts and a summary description of the Program, see http://www.darden.virginia.edu/html/standard.aspx?menu_id=39&styleid=3&id=6154
- ⁵⁰In the past year, the commitment has been reduced from three years to two.
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