4.1 Organizing at the State Level For Turnaround of Under-Performing Schools
Towards a framework that offers good support for good design

How can states most effectively organize a school turnaround initiative that reflects everything we have learned about what works – and what doesn't?

That is the central question of this report, and the focus of Part 4.

The graphic for the proposed "New-World" turnaround framework that has emerged from our research, shown at right, is where we will end up. On the way there, we will discuss elements in the framework that have less to do with the business of turnaround (that's addressed by the three 'C's) in Part 3, and more to do with the business of planning, launching, and managing a statewide initiative campaign.

For that is what's needed to tackle the challenge posed by failing schools: an initiative that looks less like compliance with state and federal accountability mandates, and more like an inclusive, high-visibility, entrepreneurial partnership aimed at solving an urgent public dilemma.

The Current Landscape of State-Led Initiatives
Profiles of ten representative state intervention efforts appear in the Supplement to this report. In each state initiative, there are elements of promise. But none of the states we looked at (which have all been at the forefront of this issue, in one way or another) had been able to marshal the broad leadership commitment, sustained public investment, and comprehensiveness of strategy required to bring about effective turnaround at the scale of the need.

Generally, with some caveats for progress being made in some states, current state intervention initiatives appear to lack:

- **Sufficient intensity, comprehensiveness, and sustainability**. We saw little state engagement in changing operating conditions within turnaround schools; little attention to helping schools develop an overall *people strategy*, as opposed to providing limited forms of staff development; little clustering of schools with similar attributes or turnaround strategies; insufficient engagement in building, statewide, capacity for turnaround management both inside schools and districts and among turnaround partners; and only limited connections between school-level turnaround efforts and parallel efforts to improve struggling districts.

- **Incentives powerful enough to drive major change**. We saw few states establishing clear, aggressive performance targets for restructuring schools that carried equally clear terminal consequences; and far too little emphasis on positive incentives that can motivate buy-in to more fundamental kinds of reform.

- **Strong public and private sector commitment to turnaround**. We saw individuals (the occasional governor, commissioner, or state board chair) or state policymaking bodies taking the lead in advocating for turnaround, but not many signals of the kind of public/private consensus that has produced real impact in other areas of school reform, such as higher standards. In a few states, courts are playing a role in focusing attention to the issue, but business, community groups, and universities have for the most part not been deeply engaged.

- **Willingness to think outside of the box regarding management of the initiative**. With a couple of exceptions, school intervention

Can it be done? *We are convinced that it can – if states approach the challenge with commitment and inventiveness.*

initiatives primarily have been organized and operated through the most traditional channel, meaning the accountability or technical service wing of the state education agency. Virginia and Alabama are two states that have tried (in very different ways; see Supplemental Report) to address the turnaround challenge with a different kind of management approach.

The Way Forward

Much of this is understandable, given the nascent nature of accountability-driven school turnaround. It is only in the past couple of years that underperforming schools have begun hitting No Child Left Behind's most extreme categories – Corrective Action or Restructuring. But there is a growing recognition in the states we studied that 2007 and 2008 are watershed years for state responsiveness on this issue. The dimensions and complexity of the challenge are clear enough, and so now is the urgency as more and more schools move into each state's category for the most dramatic forms of intervention.

Can it be done? We are convinced that it can – if states approach the challenge with commitment and inventiveness.

tiveness. The framework we present in this section of the report encompasses, at the tactical level, the three 'C's discussed in Part 3. But it also includes two other elements we believe are fundamental to success:

- **Statewide and community coalition-building**: Creating a constituency and leadership consensus for turnaround that is strong enough to sustain the effort and retain a focus on what works for students, more so than adults.

- **Freedom and authority to manage the initiative creatively**: Providing the same degree of operating authority to the statewide management of the initiative that the framework insists school turnaround leaders need – perhaps through the creation of new kind of coordinating agency.

These elements are explored in Part 4.3 and in the proposed framework that follows. First, in Part 4.2, we discuss the state policymaking context in which this – or any – kind of turnaround framework would be implemented, one shaped more than anything else by the impact of No Child Left Behind.

Preview of the Proposed State Framework for School Turnaround
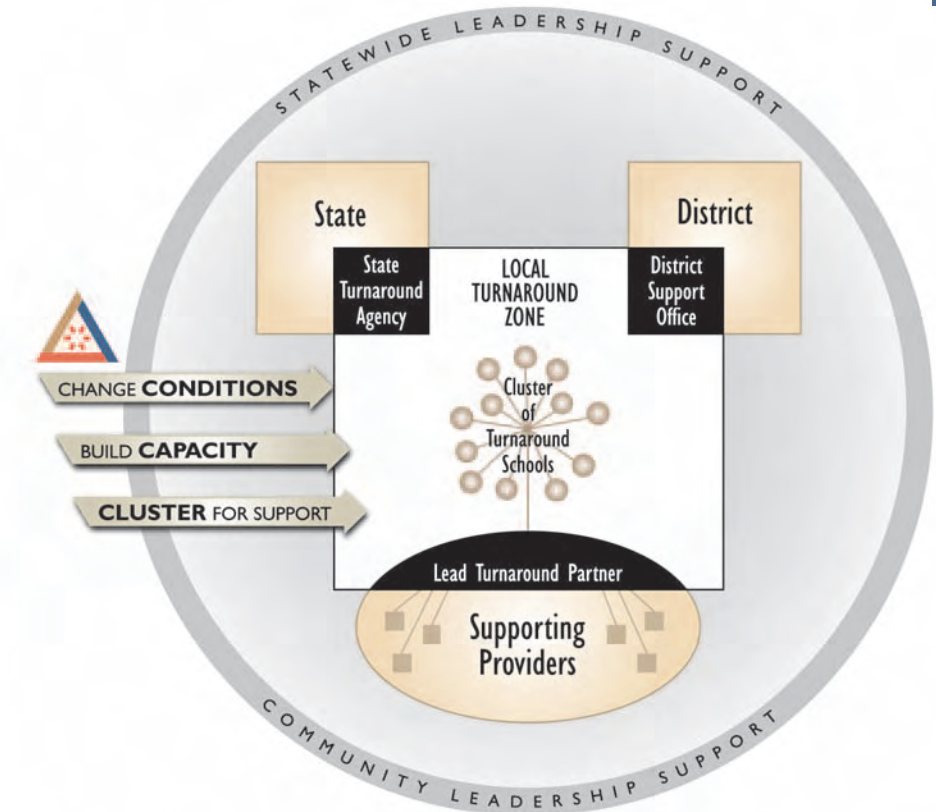
The proposed framework, presented in Part 5, incorporates the three 'C's of effective turnaround and two additional elements: the building of statewide and community coalitions necessary to sustain support; and providing for effective coordination of the initiative.

4.2 NCLB's Mixed Impact on School Intervention
NCLB has forced the issue, but has not catalyzed an adequate response

The federal No Child Left Behind Act has brought accountability to public education, as its framers hoped. A critical element of that new emphasis on accountability is the law's provisions for schools that fail to meet their achievement targets. The urgency produced by solid, unarguable performance data identifying struggling schools, coupled with a set of mandated, escalating intervention strategies, was supposed to usher in a new "no-excuses" era of state-driven turnaround in our most chronically under-performing schools.

That's not the way it has turned out. At least: not yet.

NCLB's unfulfilled impact on school turnaround is a classic example of unintended consequences. Three aspects of the law, in particular, have produced responses at the state and local levels that are different from what supporters of the legislation were undoubtedly envisioning. They relate to the timing and sequencing of NCLB's consequences for underperformance; the nature of the intervention options presented by the law; and the scale of the schools heading through the accountability pipeline. (A fourth aspect – the lack of targeted funding for the more intensive forms

of intervention – has more to do with politics and budget-making than with policy design, and may improve with NCLB's forthcoming reauthorization.

Seven Years to Action

Figure 4B shows the sequence and timeline for the steps required of under-performing schools under NCLB. The steps provide for a gradually escalating series of measures designed to improve struggling schools, serve currently enrolled students with additional help, and offer them the opportunity to switch to a different (presumably better) school.

Some aspects of the steps in years 3-5 of the series have come under scrutiny for failing to produce desired results, including the Supplemental Educational Services programs and the school choice provisions. But our principal focus here is on the "final step" – NCLB's provisions for schools that have failed to improve despite the interventions set in place by interim steps.

On paper, the escalating consequences for under-performing schools might seem logical and appropriate. In practice, though, a chronically failing middle school could pass two complete generations of students through grades 6-8 before NCLB's

most intensive forms of intervention are introduced. While those students are muddling their way through their years at the school – developing neither the skills nor the knowledge required to succeed in high school – the school undergoes, in most states,

an extensive series of reviews and light-touch forms of planning assistance that have little significant impact. The "Call to Action" chart on page 7 provides a vivid portrait of policy "fiddling" while student achievement lags.

FIGURE 4B **The NCLB Intervention Timeline: Seven Years to Intensive Intervention**

Years Not Making AYP	Improvement Status Under NCLB	Action To Be Taken
1	None	None
2	None	After second year of not making AYP, school is identified as "In Need of Improvement"
3	In Need of Improvement (Year One)	School choice for enrolled students Develop and implement improvement plan
4	In Need of Improvement (Year Two)	Continue choice Supplemental educational services (SES) to low-income children Develop and implement improvement plan
5	In Need of Corrective Action	Continue choice Continue SES Implement corrective action plan (may include replacing school staff, instituting new curriculum, extending the school year or day, bringing in outside experts)
6	Planning for Restructuring	Continue choice Continue SES Develop a 2-year restructuring plan *(see in box on next page)*
7	Restructuring	Continue choice Continue SES Implement restructuring plan

Adapted from Center on Education Policy (2006) and the Commission on No Child Left Behind (Aspen Institute, 2007)

NCLB's Five Restructuring Options Extend from Incremental to Major Change

TAXONOMY 1

INCREMENTAL CHANGE

SYSTEM CHANGE

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
including 2 of NCLB's options for restructuring

MAJOR RESTRUCTURING
including 3 of NCLB's options for restructuring

Revision	Reconstitution	Contract Management	State Management	Charter Conversion	
Theory: program needs improvement	Theory: staff is insufficiently skilled	Theory: change school management, along with program, people, conditions	Theory: state must assume control as district has abrogated its right to manage the school	Theory: best to circumvent entire system	Each option applies to schools retained and restructured, as well as schools closed and reopened. For brief explanation of options, see box overleaf on NCLB restructuring options.
NCLB OPTION 5	NCLB OPTION 2	NCLB OPTION 3	NCLB OPTION 4	NCLB OPTION I	

Same School

New Start

Although these are two of NCLB's restructuring options, our research shows they are insufficient to produce effective turnaround.

For a brief explanation of the NCLB Restructuring options, see box on the following page.

This is the first installment in our Intervention Taxonomy, designed to help clarify school-intervention's terms and to place NCLB's five Restructuring options within the context of our analysis.

We have assigned labels to each option and ordered them differently from their appearance in the law (in order to match the analysis coming in Taxonomy 2). These "Same School" options (see the folder tabs at extreme right) all share one thing: everything else may change – governance, management, teachers, programs – but the student population at the school essentially remains the same. There is another option, though, being undertaken by some districts – most notably Chicago, under its Renaissance 2010 initiative. That "New Start" option is to simply close under-performing schools, distribute their students, and literally start over from scratch (usually as a charter, contract, or special in-district school).
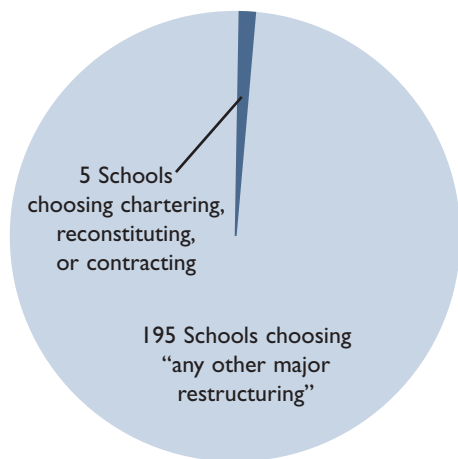
NCLB's Mixed Impact

(continued)

The "Other" Restructuring Category: Taking the Easy Way Out

The box on this page spells out the five options for restructuring that NCLB requires of schools entering their sixth consecutive year of under-performance (defined as not making Adequate Yearly Progress, their annual achievement target). The options also appear on the Intervention

FIGURE 4D

Schools in Restructuring Choose Incremental Over Fundamental Reform
Chicago Schools in Restructuring, 2005

5 Schools choosing chartering, reconstituting, or contracting

195 Schools choosing "any other major restructuring"

Source: Chicago Public Schools

In the fall of 2005, there were approximately 200 schools in Chicago in NCLB-mandated planning for restructuring or in restructuring itself. The state allows only four of the five NCLB options for restructuring: chartering, reconstituting staff and principal, contracting, and the fifth "any other major restructuring" category. Illinois does not allow for a school to be turned over to the state. Of those schools, none chose to charter, 1 replaced the staff and principal, 4 replaced only the principal, none chose to contract, and 195 chose "other major restructuring."

Taxonomy 1 and 2 charts on pages 59 and 61. Three of the options involve management change; the school would be turned into a charter school, or taken over by the state, or assigned to an independent contractor. One option, widely referred to as reconstitution, calls for the replacement of school staff and (potentially) leadership; and the fifth option provides for the implementation of "any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms."

This fifth option, which we call Revision on our Taxonomy charts, has achieved a degree of notoriety over the past several years as more and more schools have moved through NCLB's intervention steps. A host of policy studies produced by the Center for Education Policy and other groups has shown the extreme propensity of schools in restructuring (or their district leaders) to choose this "wild card" option – the least intrusive, by far, among the five. Out of 200 Chicago public schools that had entered the restructuring planning phase in 2005, for example, 195 chose this option. (See Figure 4D.) In California, 76% of schools in restructuring in 2005 had chosen the option (see Taxonomy 2, facing page).

The fifth NCLB option, many researchers suggest, has been used essentially to extend the reliance upon incremental strategies common in the earlier stages of NCLB intervention – new curricular programs or additional staff development. (DiBiase, 2005; CEP, 2006) What is intended under the law to be a fundamental restructuring of a school's operations, management, and approach to teaching and learning, in other words, has most often stayed comfortably within the realm of incremental reform. We examine these strategies more closely in Appendix A.

A host of policy studies … has shown the extreme propensity of schools in restructuring (or their district leaders) to choose this "wild card" option – the least intrusive, by far, among the five.

Schools' Response to NCLB's Options: The Less Change, the Better

TAXONOMY 2

Increasing comprehensiveness of change ➡

Research found conditions change to be a crucial element for effective turnaround

4.2

CONDITIONS CHANGE

GOVERNANCE CHANGE

MANAGEMENT CHANGE

PEOPLE CHANGE

PROGRAM CHANGE

Revision	Reconstitution	Contract Management	State Management	Charter Conversion
Theory: program needs improvement	Theory: staff is insufficiently skilled	Theory: change school management, along with program, people, conditions	Theory: state must assume control as district has abrogated its right to manage the school	Theory: best to circumvent entire system
NCLB OPTION 5	NCLB OPTION 2	NCLB OPTION 3	NCLB OPTION 4	NCLB OPTION 1

Each option applies to schools retained and restructured, as well as schools closed and reopened. For brief explanation of options, see box opposite on NCLB restructuring options.

Same School / New Start

CA: 0%   MI: 0%   CA: 0%   MI: 2%

CA: 20%   MI: 14%

MI: 28%

Popularity of choice is inversely proportional to the comprehensiveness of change

CA: 61%

MI: 76%

CA: 93%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

This chart, adapted from one that appears in the Winter 2007 issue of *Education Next* ("The Easy Way Out," S. Mead), demonstrates educators' and local policymakers' propensity to choose the "path of least resistance" among the five NCLB Restructuring options, using data from 533 schools in California and Michigan. The vast majority conduct Revision work (NCLB's "any other major restructuring" choice), focusing on program change. Very few adopt any of the choices that involve changes in management or governance, or that fundamentally alter operating conditions (authority over staff, time, and money). *California data 2005-6 and Michigan data 2004-5 are from the Center on Education Policy 2005 , as cited in Mead.*

NCLB's Mixed Impact
(continued)

In some states, NCLB has propelled so many schools through the accountability pipeline that policymakers… have begun watering down restructuring plans.

The Scale Problem: Too Many Schools in the Pipeline

NCLB has had another unintended effect on turnaround design, particularly in states that already had developed intervention efforts as part of their own standards and school accountability systems. To begin with, NCLB's mandates (and the federal already created their own system. Trying to ascertain exactly what each state is doing in the area of school restructuring is a challenging exercise in itself; some states appear to have created parallel school accountability plans (one of their own design, one designed for compliance with NCLB), while others have tried to merge the

But, even more discouraging: in some states, NCLB has propelled so many schools through the accountability pipeline that policymakers – wary of promising a level of intervention far beyond what their current budgets could possibly support – have begun considered intervention plan of several years ago has more recently (in the face of the now more than 700 schools statewide facing restructuring) become a pale imitation of its former self. (See the Supplemental Report for more information on California and other states.)

NCLB, one could argue, cannot be held to blame for the rising tide of schools entering restructuring – that would be akin to holding the weight-scale responsible for the ten pounds gained over the holidays. But large numbers of schools are moving through that accountability pipeline because they are not making AYP on behalf of a student subgroup – English Language Learners (ELL), for example, or Special Education students or one or more demographic groups. While these schools clearly can use some help in serving the student subgroups in question, in some states they may be overloading the accountability and intervention system, with the result that the truly dysfunctional, under-performing schools don't receive the more fundamental restructuring help they need.

From the Front Lines of State Intervention:

At the start of the 2006-2007 school year, **Arizona** identified sixty-four schools that were deemed "failing to meet academic standards." This figure represents an approximately six-fold increase in the number of schools in the restructuring phase in Arizona. As these schools begin to undertake restructuring activities, the effectiveness and viability of Arizona's team-based and aggressive approach to centralizing school restructuring power will face an increasingly difficult capacity test….

During the 2005-2006 school year, 401 schools in **California** were in either the planning or implementation stages of restructuring. Entering the 2006-2007 school year, this number jumped by approximately 75 percent, to 701 schools. In response to the challenges of scale, California has changed course dramatically, adopting an approach to NCLB restructuring that focuses heavily on local control of school turnaround efforts. In fact, California does not require approval of restructuring plans and primarily provides technical assistance to local education agencies regarding the procedural considerations of devising a restructuring plan….

The growing issue of scale has caused **Hawaii** education officials to begin re-evaluating its privatized approach to restructuring schools. Projected increases in the number of schools entering restructuring have caused concern over increases to already expensive private restructuring programs. One official indicated her belief that the system was slowly moving toward a scenario in which all Hawaii schools would enter the restructuring phase….

Note: These are excerpts from state profiles included in the Supplementary Report. See that report for more.

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government's unwillingness to be flexible about compliance, in the years after the law was passed) created another layer of regulations, labels, timelines, and consequences for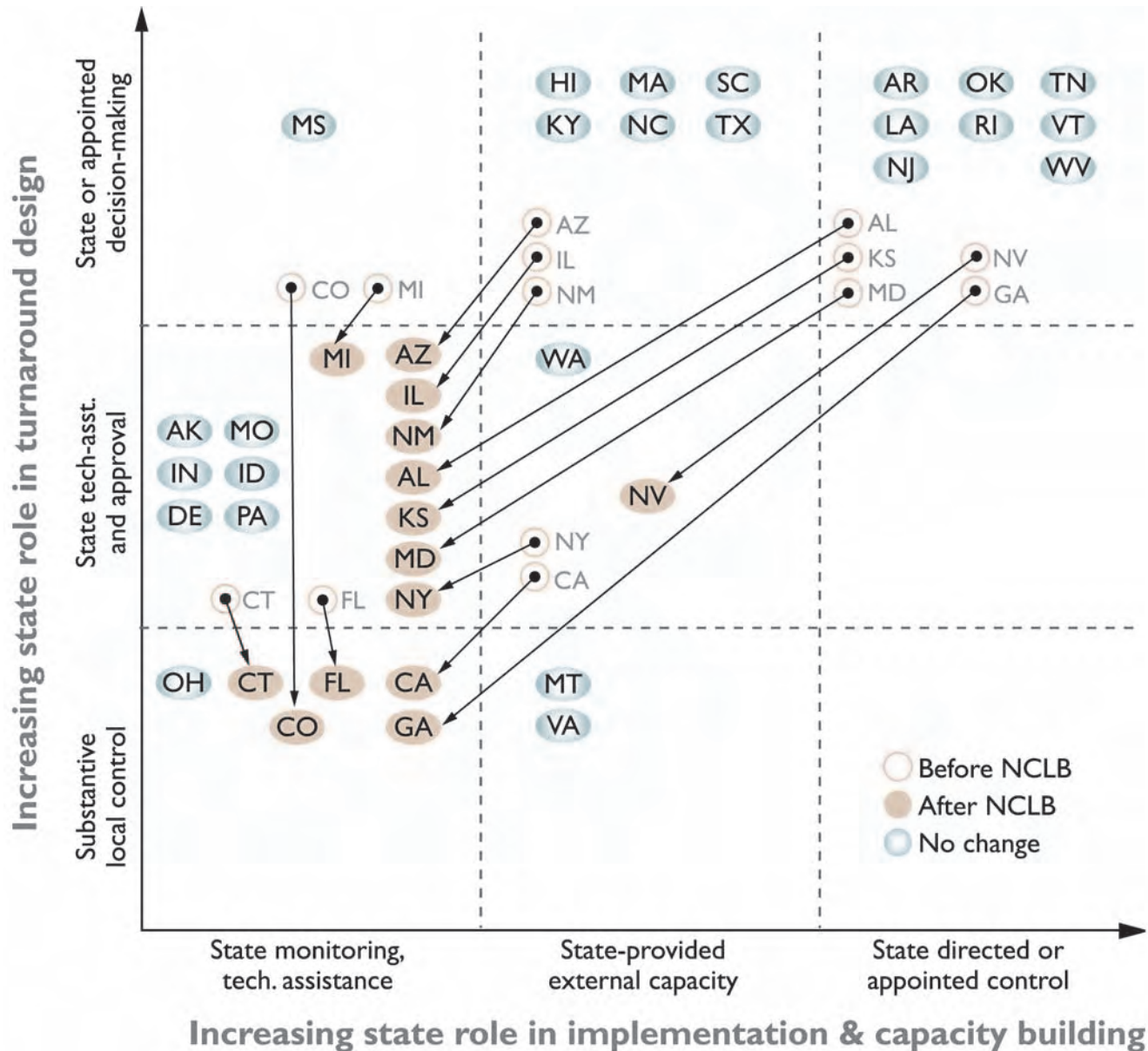 underperformance in states that had two, with sometimes conflicting results. One California policymaker last year counted five separate accountability systems in place at once in that state, creating confusion at every level. watering down restructuring plans, severely curtailing the degree and duration of state intervention support. (See Figure 4F, opposite.) California is perhaps the most visible example of this trend; its extensive, thoroughly-

4.1 Organizing at the State Level > 4.2 NCLB's Mixed Impact > 4.3 State Turnaround Management

NCLB's Impact on State Planning for Intervention: Diminished State Roles in Design and Implementation

From upper-right to lower-left: the magnitude of the turnaround challenge is forcing states to weaken the anticipated state role. This chart places selected state plans for restructuring, based on publicly available information, within a nine-cell grid. State plans that are in the lower left cell specify a minimal state role, both in terms of restructuring design (the Y axis) and in terms of involvement in implementation (the X axis). State plans that are in the upper right cell, on the other hand, call for a much more significant state role.

States' original restructuring plans for under-performing schools were in many cases more "interventionist" than they have become in recent years – since the passage of NCLB and the burgeoning number of schools entering the restructuring pipeline. That migration towards a limited state role is reflected by the arrows in this chart, showing states that appear to have moved from the center and upper right down towards the lower left.

Two caveats. The chart is somewhat subjective, as many state plans call for a range of intervention options and roles that could place them in multiple cells; we have placed these states as accurately as we could, as of the winter of 2006-7. Secondly: this chart depicts *state plans* for restructuring, and in many cases there is some distance between the plans and the subsequent follow-through. States were selected because they appeared to be broadly representative of various types of approaches to restructuring, discussed in Appendix A of the report and in detail in the Supplementary Report.

4.3 **Proactive Policymaking Is Not Enough**

A state turnaround initiative requires entrepreneurial management and broad coalition-building

State leaders eager to create a more effective initiative to turn around failing schools will find, as we did, guidance on what turnaround might look like at the ground level, based in part on the strategies of high-performing, high-poverty schools. And they'll find an emerging research base on the impact – or more accurately, the lack of impact – of most state intervention efforts to date on chronically under-performing schools.

They *won't* find much guidance at all on two aspects of the work we view as critical to the success of any serious state-led effort to turn around failing schools:

- **The need to free up state government's management of the turnaround initiative from typical public-agency constraints; and**

- **The need to build coalitions of leadership support for turnaround at the state and local levels**.

The first is required to provide the state (and districts) with the same operating flexibility to manage school turnaround as that which schools need in order to implement it successfully on the ground. The second is required in order to create a constituency for turnaround that is strong enough to upset the status quo – and sustain sizable and continuing state investment.

Freeing Up State Government to Lead Turnaround Effectively

Policymakers often chafe (often justifiably) when business principles are applied to the affairs of state. So do public school educators. Discussions quickly devolve into arguments about why producing successful students is different from producing successful widgets.

At the classroom level, the differences may be important. But at the level of managing and implementing change at scale, the differences remain relevant only if one assumes that education cannot conduct its business any differently from the ways it always has. Business has learned, far better than education, how change happens and what prevents it from happening. When a failing IBM sought to reinvent its business model in the 1970s, it did so by identifying change agents and separating them from the structures and culture that had brought the company to its knees. The unit that produced the IBM PC was a "skunkworks" lab based in Boca Raton – far from company head-quarters in Armonk, NY. The business literature, from Tom Peters (*In Search of Excellence*, 1988) to Jim Collins (*From Good to Great*, 2001), is rife with examples of companies that understood how to successfully incubate fundamental change. Public policymaking and the implementation of new policy, for the most part, have been slow to incorporate these lessons.

State education agencies are the default managers for any turnaround initiative. But they are in many ways ill-suited to conduct a dramatic-change strategy by using their cus-

Like school leaders working on the ground, turnaround's statewide implementers need to be freed to do their best work.

tomary structures and approaches – just as IBM was ill-suited to redevelop its own business model from within. Restraints over hiring, salaries, and authority in state agencies, coupled with similar restraints over how work is conducted in schools, have conspired to make it difficult for education policy and practice to duplicate business's occasional success at reinventing itself.

What would a different model look like? There is precedent in the approach that some states have taken in creating public-private, semi-autonomous authorities to undertake important public initiatives, including infrastructure improvements and transportation management. A turnaround "authority" might well be connected with a state education agency and its commissioner – but be granted sufficient operating flexibility to be able to work effectively with turnaround schools implementing fundamental change strategies. It would not become a bureaucracy itself, with a large staff of service providers, but would take on the role of coordinating the central state functions in turnaround as defined in the proposed framework that begins on page 69: particularly, establishing and implementing the condition-changing criteria for turnaround design, and supporting the development of turnaround leadership capacity among educators and turnaround partner organizations.

As with the thinking behind the existing public authorities, an agency to coordinate a state turnaround initiative should be able to recruit the very best leadership possible, and provide them with the tools and latitude necessary to complete an important public-service priority. The directors of state initiatives we spoke with while producing this report tended to feel that their hands were somewhat tied behind their back. Like school leaders working on the ground, turnaround's statewide implementers need to be freed to do their best work.

Building Leadership Coalitions of Turnaround Support

Beyond questions of state turnaround management is the matter of leadership commitment, at both the state and local levels. Failing schools have no natural constituency. They tend to be situated in higher-poverty neighborhoods and communities that have fallen into a continuous cycle of low expectations. Low test scores do not, as they might in more affluent communities, spark activism from parents. There is little ground-level demand for state or district intervention in struggling schools. What demand there is, comes from state policymakers monitoring the economic and racial achievement gap; non-profit and community leaders seeking to

4.3

Building Leadership Consensus for Turnaround
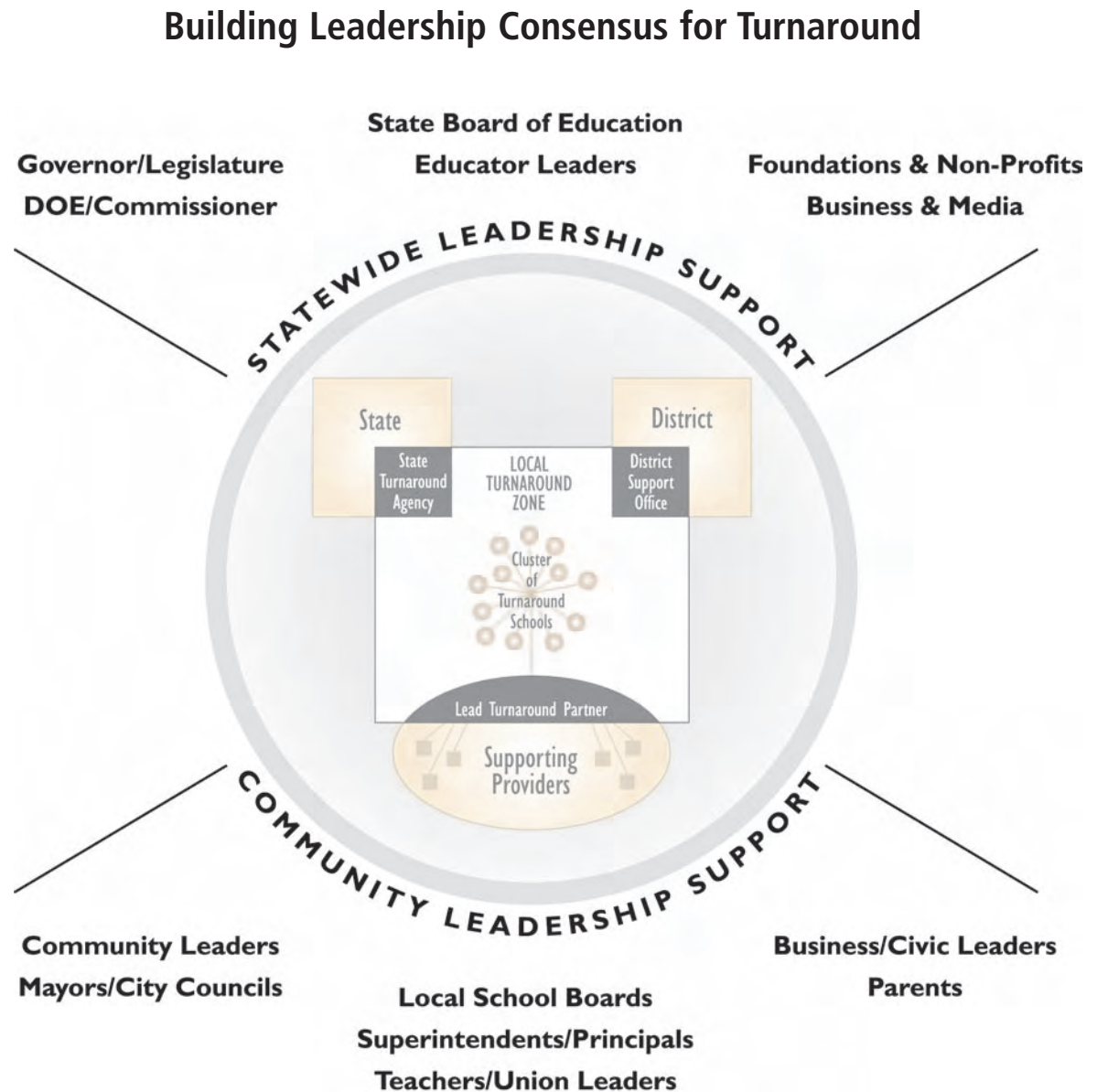
Inventing a Constituency: Turnaround of failing schools has no natural set of supporters. The support required to initiate and sustain strong state investment in intervention must be generated by statewide and local leaders who are willing to take a stand. There are many convincing arguments for it, on grounds of equal opportunity, civil rights, and social and economic need — all of them addressed in this report.

Proactive Policymaking

(continued)

revitalize communities through improved public education; and business leaders concerned about local economies, skill levels in their recruitment pools, or the social costs of dropouts and unemployable high school graduates.

Urban superintendents' public support for Massachusetts' graduation requirement provided the "air cover" that policymakers needed to maintain their commitment during the years of controversy before the requirement was implemented – and since.

There is logical precedent here; these potential supporters are the same coalition partners that, in many states (Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Texas, North Carolina, Michigan, and Florida, to name just a few) championed the cause of standards-based reform, even before the federal government got into the act with No Child Left Behind. In Massachusetts, business leadership along with rare bipartisan consensus in the state's legislative and executive branches led to the Commonwealth's successful implementation of an ambitious high school graduation requirement in 2003. The effort received a vital boost from the state's urban superintendents, whose public support for the requirement and for higher-standards reform (organized in part by Mass Insight's Great Schools Campaign) provided the "air cover" that policymakers needed to maintain their commitment during the years of controversy before the requirement was implemented – and since.[1]

Figure 4G shows the roster of potential actors in a statewide coalition to advocate for turnaround of failing schools. Proponents of a more proactive turnaround initiative need to consider the agendas and likely roles of each one.

- **Mission-driven supporters**: Selected foundations, non-profits, and business leaders; some education leaders, including policymakers and practitioners. These are the key instigators required to even get a coalition off the ground.

FIGURE 4H

Preparing a "Manifesto" for Turnaround
Drawn and adapted from "How to Start an Insurrection," in Leading the Revolution *by Gary Hamel (2000).*

1. **Convincingly demonstrate the inevitability of the cause**: Here's why turnaround is necessary, right now.

2. **Speak to timeless human needs and aspirations**: Here's why you should care about failing schools and the students they serve.

3. **Draw clear implications for action**: Here's where the need suggests that we start.

4. **Elicit support**: Here's how you can contribute.

5. **Search for "data bombs"**: Find memorable local statistics on failing schools that are strong enough to illustrate the need, and simple enough to enter the language.

6. **Find simple phrases and powerful analogies**: Create "handles" for people to learn to use as shorthand for the effort.

7. **Stay constructive**: Don't rehearse past intervention failures unnecessarily.

8. **Provide broad recommendations only**: Don't become trapped by a single, do-or-die course of action.

9. **Keep your manifesto short**: The more concise, the better.

10. **Make the manifesto opportunity-focused**: Where's the big win to focus energy and resources on first?

11. **Sometimes you need a stick**: Identifying a bad outcome from status-quo approaches can provide urgency and incentive.

- **Conditional supporters**: Statewide political leaders including the governor, state board chair, chief state school officer, and legislative leaders; and local leaders, depending on whether and how their communities would benefit (or not) under a proposed state turnaround initiative. Support from this group requires a merging of multiple self-interested agendas.

- **Potential opponents**: The most obvious candidates here are local school boards and teacher unions, both caught up in concerns about losing authority. But in fact, major school districts such as Chicago, Miami-Dade, Philadelphia, and Boston have demonstrated the feasibility of partnering with their union locals (with support from school boards) over turnaround initiatives focused on their most struggling schools. Massachusetts' Commonwealth Pilot Schools initiative (see Appendix A) was designed in large part to encourage local collaboration around a major-change turnaround strategy, and was modeled on a ten-year-old agreement between the Boston Public Schools and the district's American Federation of Teachers union affiliate.

As for other potential opponents: Some legislators in communities without failing schools may oppose dedicating state funding for turnaround, knowing that none of that funding will ever show up in their communities. Perhaps most importantly, legislators and advocates for other investment targets (within the realm of education reform or not) will oppose sizable increases in public funding for under-performing schools, usually on the grounds that the state money they're already receiving is being ill-spent.

How to Start an Insurrection

Insurrection is an incendiary term not often heard in public policy circles. But in his influential book, *Leading the Revolution*, researcher and business strategist Gary Hamel (2000) provides a blueprint for engineering dramatic

> *Win small, win early, win often. In turnaround terms: Don't try to address every failing school at once.*

change that turnaround advocates would do well to review. The "manifesto" he describes (see box) as a launchpad for "starting an insurrection" within a corporation could serve just as well as an 11-point guide for building the case for turnaround. Other relevant advice for coalition-builders and statewide turnaround

strategists from his book, which is based on research into business turnarounds and grassroots movements:

- **Win small, win early, win often**. In turnaround terms: Don't try to address every failing school at once. Choose to work intensively with a manageable group of schools, districts, and clusters; establish some success first, and then expand from there.

- **Co-opt and neutralize**. In the context of turnaround, this is true at the tactical level, in schools, and at the strategic and policy levels as well. At both levels, in general, turnaround cannot succeed and endure without broad engagement and buy-in. "Researchers agree that reform only works if those most
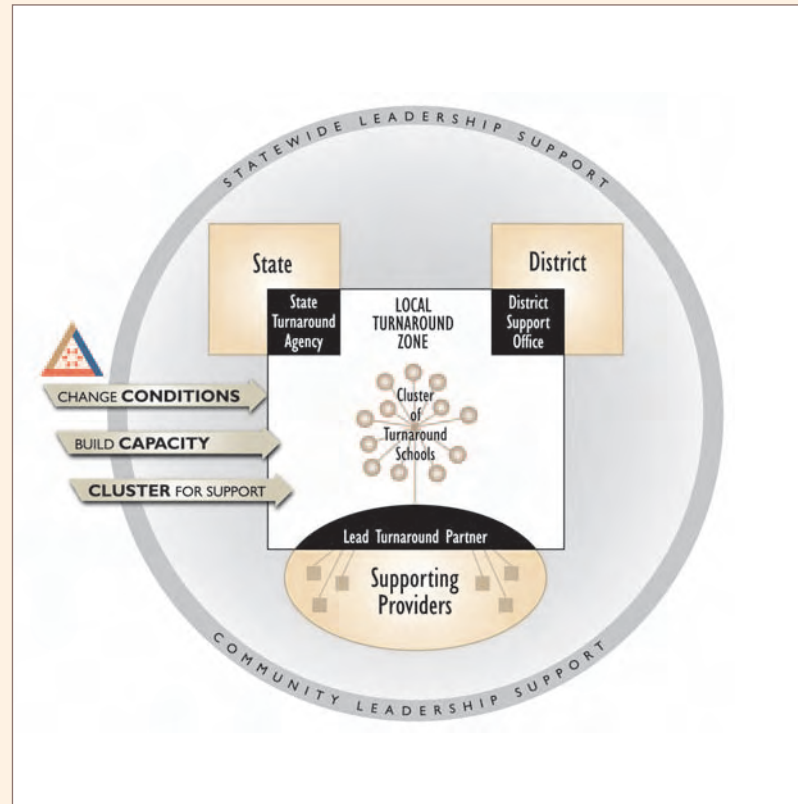
directly involved in it (teachers, school staff, school leaders, parents, and students) buy into it. Researchers… go so far as to say 'No Buy-in, No Reform.'" (Cohen and Ginsburg, 2001) The key to gaining buy-in at both levels is establishing, at the outset, consensus that in these bottom-five-per-

cent schools, the status quo has not worked and urgently needs to be changed. Important elements in the proposed turnaround framework beginning on page 70 address this issue of buy-in.

- **Find a translator**. The work of turnaround is extraordinarily complex. Yet its basic principles – and the needs among failing schools that drive them – must be made clearly and memorably to decision-makers and practitioners alike. Hamel describes the need for a "translator" to serve as a bridge between the strategists who are immersed in the work and everyone else.

Coalition-building, as should be clear from the discussion above, needs to happen at two levels – statewide and community. Statewide leadership consensus can bring about productive policymaking and investment, but successful, sustained implementation on the ground requires support from educators, municipal leaders, parents, and students. How the state can catalyze that support, while requiring a level of change that upsets the status quo, is the balancing act that lies at the center of the state turnaround policy framework that follows.

"*There are some things we know and a host of unanswered questions, but this is the laboratory of the future.*"
    – Michael Fullan, *Leadership and Sustainability*, 2005

Plan for Action

Recommendations for Policymakers, Educators, and Turnaround Advocates

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

Turnaround must also ready the school for the lengthier, subsequent process of transitioning into a truly high-performing organization.

Part 5 presents our recommended framework for a state initiative to turn around the most chronically under-performing public schools.

Defining the Approach: What does effective, comprehensive turnaround involve?

SYSTEM REDESIGN: Changing the Whole School

1. Turnaround is a dramatic, multi-dimensional change process at a chronically under-performing school.
2. Successful school turnaround produces significant gains in student achievement over a compressed time frame, as the first of a two-phase restructuring process.

The Three 'C' Strategies: How can the state catalyze effective turnaround at scale?

CHANGING CONDITIONS: The Authority to Act

3. Effective turnaround relies on widely-recognized program reform elements, but it depends equally on the *conditions into which those reform elements are applied*.

BUILDING CAPACITY: *People* Before *Programs*

4. Maximizing leadership and staff capacity is the most important element in turnaround success – and the state's most important role.
5. Fragmented, episodic assistance from outside partners must be replaced by a new paradigm of aligned, integrated support.

CLUSTERING FOR SUPPORT: Organizing the Change

6. Effective turnaround solutions focus on producing change at the school and classroom level, organized in clusters of schools by need, design, or region.
7. Effective turnaround at scale requires a transparent, deliberate blending of "loose" and "tight" in implementation and design.
8. For scale, efficiency, capacity-building, and effectiveness, states should differentiate their involvement in turnaround by the degree of local capacity.

Organizing the State Role: What is required to enable an effective, state-led turnaround initiative?

STATEWIDE & COMMUNITY COALITIONS: The Necessary Leadership Consensus

9. Because under-performing schools have no natural constituency, advocates for turnaround must proactively build leadership support at the state and community levels.

EFFECTIVE STATEWIDE COORDINATION: A Different Kind of Agency to Address a Different Kind of Challenge

10. The state must free itself to be able to undertake this work.

A Framework for Turnaround of Under-Performing Schools

This suggested framework for a state initiative to turn around chronically under-performing schools draws from the findings and conclusions reached by Mass Insight's researchers for this report, and from vetting with educators, policymakers, and reform experts nationwide. Its guiding assumptions rest on evidence from research on school interventions and effective education practice over the past ten years. The ten elements in the framework represent both a summary of this report's findings and a synthesis, applied to the challenge every state currently faces in addressing chronically under-performing schools.

The framework rests in part on the conclusion to our analysis of NCLB's restructuring options, presented in the final chart in our Intervention Taxonomy series on page 75. The research suggests avenues for turnaround that NCLB does not, at present, clearly and actively support. In particular: the turnaround strategy we label "Superintendent's Schools" in this chart reflects the thinking behind the statewide turnaround zone and school clusters in the proposed framework.

There is no single state that has assembled, funded, and begun to implement a turnaround strategy incorporating all of the elements of this framework. Aspects have been drawn from several state intervention efforts – chiefly Massachusetts and somewhat from Florida, Maryland, and several of the other states profiled in the Supplemental Report – and from districts with pioneering intervention programs underway, including Chicago, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia.

The political landscape, social/economic circumstances, and education reform experience and structures of every state will make development of this kind of initiative uniquely challenging. The proposed framework is an ambitious one. But we believe that commitment, organization, and inventiveness on this scale is what the research clearly suggests is required for any state that is serious about turning around its most under-performing schools. The framework is intended – like the entire report – to jumpstart informed discussion and action around the vital importance of school turnaround, the opportunity it represents to bring about fundamental change, and the need to pursue it with a fully integrated, comprehensive, well-supported strategy.

Defining the Approach: What does effective, comprehensive turnaround involve?

SYSTEM REDESIGN:
Changing the Whole School

1 **Turnaround is a dramatic, multi-dimensional change process at a chronically under-performing school.** Turnaround is understood to be distinct from *school improvement* because it: a) focuses only on the most consistently under-performing schools – essentially the bottom five percent; and b) involves system-transforming change that is propelled by an imperative – the school must significantly improve its academic outcomes or it will be redefined or removed. Interventions focused on one particular strategy – staff development, a new curriculum, a reconstituted teaching staff – are unlikely to produce the desired result. *Turnaround* is the integrated, comprehensive combination of fundamental changes in program, people, conditions, and (sometimes, but not necessarily) management and governance required to interrupt the status quo and put a school on a new track towards high performance.

Because most chronically under-performing schools serve high-poverty, high-challenge student populations, turnaround involves much more than "fixing" organizational dysfunction; it requires intensive tuning of strategy and culture to address learning deficits, behavioral challenges, and the effects of environmental deprivation. This is (in part) turnaround's larger role: providing exemplar strategies for the *significantly* increasing numbers of high-poverty schools projected over the next ten years.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ Governor, commissioner, and/or state board of education chair ask for summary report on impact of state intervention programs to date, and on the pace of schools entering the failing categories under NCLB/state accountability.

▶ Simultaneously: state prepares a new turnaround initiative, incorporating strategies drawn from *The Turnaround Challenge* and other sources. High-performing, high-poverty schools and promising turnaround exemplars in the state are identified as "proof points."

▶ Basic elements of the initiative are vetted with stakeholders, collaborators, key decision-makers, potential outside funders (see #10 on page 86 for more).

▶ Results of the study are announced, together with the initiative; state's commitment to turning around failing schools is reaffirmed; focus is placed on moving beyond marginal intervention to much more dramatic changes that will turn failing schools into models for reform statewide.

▶ *Emphasis*: on positive change, rather than negative labeling.

Turnaround is the integrated, comprehensive combination of fundamental changes in program, people, conditions, and (sometimes, but not necessarily) management and governance required to interrupt the status quo and put a school on a new track towards high performance.

A Framework *(continued)*

2 **Successful school turnaround produces significant improvement in student achievement over a compressed time frame** (no more than two years) and, in high schools, significant gains in attendance and graduation rates as well. Turnaround of these lowest of the low-performing schools can be seen as a two-phase process, each phase requiring different (though complementary) elements and skill sets. Phase one estab-

Turnaround can be seen as a two-phase process, each phase requiring different (though complementary) elements and skill sets.

lishes the conditions necessary for fundamental reform to take root – in particular, providing for sufficient authority to allocate critical resources (people, time, money) to support a turnaround plan staked to the research-based practices of high-performing, high-poverty (HPHP) schools. It provides for placing people with the right skills in the most critical positions: leadership with expertise in school turnaround and teachers drawn to working in high-challenge (but high-reward) environments, all as part of an innovative, highly collaborative reform initiative and a dynamic school design. Reaching district performance averages in this first phase – within two years – is a reasonable goal. Phase two comprises the hard work of steady improvement, sustaining incremental growth over time and transitioning into a truly high-performing organization.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ State turnaround initiative sets a specific, ambitious, but reasonable and understandable goal for significant achievement gains within two years (i.e.: meeting district averages).

▶ Following the two-year turnaround period, the school is returned to normal state/federal accountability requirements and timelines.

▶ State initiative requires schools meeting certain, fairly extreme under-performance criteria to become turnaround schools (i.e.: schools with undeniably, indefensibly poor achievement records over multiple years). The initiative invites less severely under-performing schools to volunteer into the program as a means of "pre-emptive turnaround." (See #8 on page 82.)

▶ State initiative requires districts, working with turnaround partners, to submit a turnaround plan meeting certain criteria (see #3, next page). Plans that fail to meet the criteria are denied; those schools are declared chronically under-performing and are subject to management and governance change as directed by the state.

▶ *Emphasis*: This is the last chance, over two years, for current managers (district, teachers union) – with assistance from the state and an external turnaround partner – to show they can produce significant results.

The Three 'C' Strategies: How can the state catalyze effective turnaround at scale?

CHANGING CONDITIONS:
The Authority to Act

3 Effective turnaround relies on widely-recognized program reform elements (curricular improvement and alignment with standards, teacher capacity-building, effective leadership, focused use of performance data, etc.), but it depends equally on the *conditions into which those reform elements are applied* – mainly, gaining authority over critical resources and levers for improved achievement. The state can play a crucial role in enabling these conditions in turnaround schools.

- **People:** Flexibility to put people with the right skills in the best position to do their most effective work – to make personnel decisions based on the needs of the school, its students, and its performance goals, and not on the needs of adults. This flexibility includes control over recruiting, hiring, placement, development, responsibilities, supervision, evaluation, and removal for chronic under-performance.

- **Time:** The authority and money required to expand time on learning for students – in conjunction with other reforms. More time, by itself, is not a silver bullet, but it appears to be a critically important supporting element in schools that successfully serve disadvantaged students. This expansion includes an extended school day and an extended school year. Additional time is similarly required for staff – for adequate professional development and for common planning. Control over scheduling (double-block periods, special enrichment/remediation periods, or more far-reaching options) is critical as well.

- **Money:** Authority to analyze current resources and allocate them to budget lines that directly support the turnaround plan. Turnaround design must include a willingness to make difficult choices between competing priorities. There must be recognition, in addition, that comprehensive turnaround is expensive. In particular, additional time and additional (often higher-capacity) staff cost money. Estimates for the cost of successful turnaround run from $250,000 to $1 million annually for three years (see box, page 79).

- **Program:** Authority to adapt and implement research-based strategies shown to be effective with the high-poverty, high-challenge students who attend most chronically under-performing schools. Leaders at HPHP schools and turnaround exemplars say this flexibility over program approaches is important for several reasons: matching services with student needs and local circumstances, prioritizing scarce resources and time, and building staff buy-in around a vision for the school. Turnaround school leaders need program flexibility within a larger framework of district-wide consistency (where student migration between schools is an issue), structure (certain required, research-based elements of turnaround design) and support (because some program elements – for example, formative assessments – are more efficiently developed across a network of schools rather than by individual school teams).

Gaining flexible control over the application of resources – and using that control – can be controversial. That is why most turnaround and improvement reform models avoid the issues surrounding *changing the conditions* and focus simply on changing programs and providing help (i.e., planning assistance, training, and all forms of coaching). Chronically under-performing schools under NCLB in fact represent an opportunity for policymakers, educators, and partners to move towards more transformative reform – i.e., models and policy frameworks that address the conditions in which instructional reform is applied. Some school districts (New York, Chicago, Miami-Dade, Philadelphia) already have moved in this direction.

A Framework *(continued)*

To ensure broad access to conditions supportive of effective turnaround, however, state governments and education agencies will need to play the crucial role. They can do so by establishing (as Arizona, Florida, and Massachusetts have done) criteria for turnaround design and implementation, and requiring districts – and outside providers – to shape their turnaround work accordingly. Superintendents routinely ask for the authority to intervene in struggling schools with powers like those granted to charter school managers. By creating a statewide turnaround space with rigorous design criteria (such as Massachusetts' first "enabling condition" – granting principals authority over staff without regard to seniority), state governments can clear aside roadblocks to reform and produce an intervention zone that education leaders actively want to *join*, instead of avoid.

What This Might Look Like:

▸ State initiative codifies, in regulations, protected space for local "turnaround zones" that a) set requirements for schools implementing turnaround; b) provide assistance, models, and contract language for districts and unions to use in creating necessary waivers to collective bargaining rules; and c) provide other forms of assistance for turnaround as detailed elsewhere in this framework.

▸ Turnaround requirements define the elements identified by the state as essential for effective, comprehensive turnaround. They specify important changes in operating conditions, including flexible authority for turnaround leaders over critical resources: people, time, money, and program. They may also specify other elements deemed vital to the turnaround process, i.e., additional time for learning and common planning time for teachers. (See box for one real-world example – Massachusetts' ten changing conditions.)

▸ *Emphasis*: state-required criteria make successful turnaround plausible; local implementation control enables all-important buy-in.
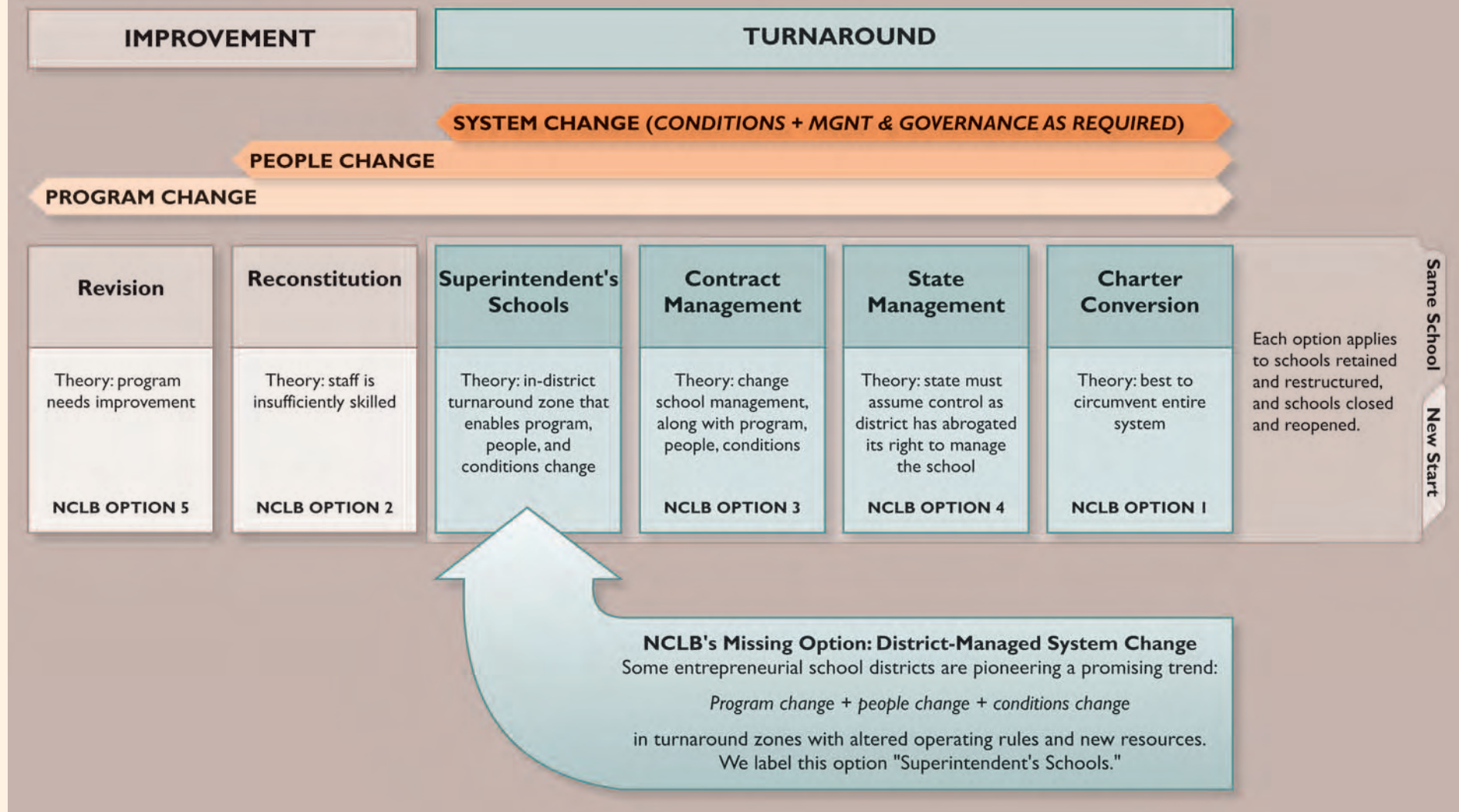
Condition-Changing State Policy: An Example

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 "enabling conditions." Because of insufficient state allocation for the initiative in FY2008 ($12 million, a third of the DOE's request), the state will only be able to partially implement the plan. But the approach and language can serve as a potential model for other states – as might Massachusetts' "Commonwealth Pilot" experiment, described on pages 106-7.

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

Introduction to the Framework   Defining the Approach   The Three 'C' Strategies   Organizing the State Role

TAXONOMY 3   Turnaround Zones Offer Superintendents the Restructuring Option They Have Lacked

IMPROVEMENT	TURNAROUND

SYSTEM CHANGE (CONDITIONS + MGNT & GOVERNANCE AS REQUIRED)

PEOPLE CHANGE

PROGRAM CHANGE

Revision	Reconstitution	Superintendent's Schools	Contract Management	State Management	Charter Conversion	
Theory: program needs improvement	Theory: staff is insufficiently skilled	Theory: in-district turnaround zone that enables program, people, and conditions change	Theory: change school management, along with program, people, conditions	Theory: state must assume control as district has abrogated its right to manage the school	Theory: best to circumvent entire system	Each option applies to schools retained and restructured, and schools closed and reopened.
NCLB OPTION 5	NCLB OPTION 2		NCLB OPTION 3	NCLB OPTION 4	NCLB OPTION 1	

Same School / New Start

NCLB's Missing Option: District-Managed System Change
Some entrepreneurial school districts are pioneering a promising trend:

Program change + people change + conditions change

in turnaround zones with altered operating rules and new resources.
We label this option "Superintendent's Schools."

This third installment in the report's Intervention Taxonomy presents our view of a more complete set of turnaround options than simply the current five presented by NCLB. Two options (Revision and Reconstitution) may spark substantial movement in some respects, but the research shows insubstantial outcomes. Charter Conversion, State Management, and Contract Management tend to incorporate program change, people change, and conditions change – and also require management or governance change. The "Superintendent's Schools" option provides for comprehensive system change – including changes in operating conditions and incentives – initiated by the district (i.e., without management or governance change). This option is unproven, but would appear to support the characteristics widely found in high-performing, high-poverty (HPHP) schools. The folders on the right indicate that these options can be pursued in two ways: by transforming existing schools or through a close-and-reopen "fresh start" strategy.

A Framework *(continued)*

BUILDING CAPACITY:
People Before *Programs*

4 **Maximizing leadership and staff capacity is the most important element in success – and the state's most important role.** The task is multi-dimensional: creating conditions that enable people to do their best work; leading recruiting, preparation, and licensure processes to ensure a high-quality pipeline of educators at all levels; and investing in continuous skill-building in high-impact areas of reform and high-need positions in the schools. Developing the highly skilled principals and teachers needed in turnaround schools adds another dimension to this crucial state role. Most importantly: turnaround requires an infusion of specialized new leadership capacity. The emerging research on high-performing, high-poverty schools and promising turnaround schools confirms the central importance of very strong leadership as probably the most critical factor in their relative success. Leading the process of turnaround clearly requires a special skill set in education (as it does in other

> *Most school districts... do not have the resources themselves to develop high-capacity school leadership – much less a specialized subset of principals with expertise in turnaround – so it must be a responsibility of the state.*

fields). Most school districts, except for perhaps the largest 100 or so, do not have the resources themselves to develop high-capacity school leadership – much less a specialized subset of principals with expertise in turnaround – so it must be a respon-

sibility of the state, working with outside partners including higher education, foundations, and non-profits (such as New Leaders for New Schools). The state must also address the need for capacity development among high-impact positions in schools (e.g., coaches, lead teachers, and performance assessment specialists); among outside providers of turnaround and related services; and among local policymakers including school board members. This is not to imply a vast increase in state education agency bureaucracy; the key is to build on the contracting and partnering that SEAs are already doing, focusing on expanding capacity throughout the entire system and on using outside partners more effectively than is currently the case (see #5 on page 78).

State-driven turnaround work needs to convey a sense of innovation, providing compelling career options for more entrepreneurially-minded educators. The effectiveness and long-term sustainability of turnaround depends on transformation of the incentive structures that govern behavior in public schools. At the district, school, and student levels, during and long after turnaround work is completed, the incentives and operating conditions must drive a continuous focus on improved student achievement. To be successful, turnaround initiatives must draw high-capacity educators and partners and must elicit the best work possible from staff who continue on at the school. Positive incentives for different stakeholders in the system include changes in working conditions, opportunities for leadership, increased autonomy, and increased compensation. Sanction-oriented incentives include prospective loss of governing control, revenue, or "headcount" (including, from the point of view of local union leaders, potential loss of union membership).

Building the Framework:
The Three 'C' Levers of Fundamental Change

What This Might Look Like:

▶ State initiative's requirements for turnaround design allow turnaround leaders much greater authority to shape school staff, through recruitment, hiring, firing, placement, development, and differentiated compensation.

▶ State turnaround initiative is promoted nationally and in-state to position it as a cutting-edge reform effort and to attract high-capacity recruits.

▶ State provides intensive training, with non-profit/university partners, in turnaround management for current and aspiring principals and school leadership teams.

▶ State connects turnaround initiative to related state programs in curriculum mapping, data analysis, remediation, staff and leadership development, and social service connections, giving schools in turnaround zones highest priority.

▶ State initiative specifically supports the development of higher-capacity external turnaround partners to support districts' turnaround planning and to provide intensive, integrated services in direct support of the turnaround plans (see #5, next page).

▶ *Emphasis*: turnaround zone schools as magnets for mission-driven, highly capable individuals.
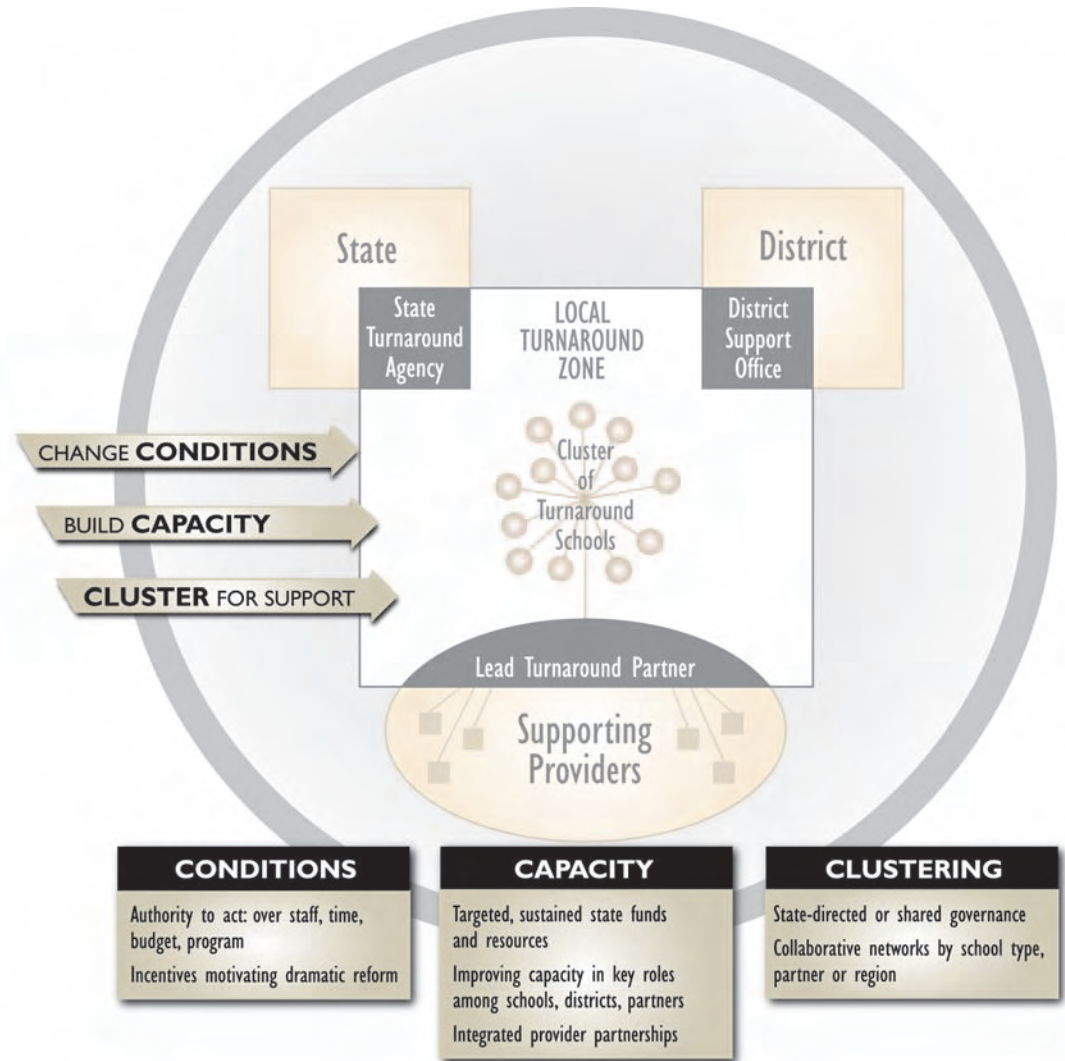
The three 'C's represent the state's primary roles in shaping school turnaround and enabling it at the ground level. For more, see numbers 3 through 8 of the Framework description on these pages.

A Framework *(continued)*

5 **Fragmented, episodic assistance from outside partners must be replaced by a new paradigm of aligned, integrated support.** By the time a school reaches NCLB's restructuring stage, it has probably hosted literally dozens of separate reform programs and partners, with little or no integration happening to form a coherent whole. That is due partly to funding streams that operate in separate "silos"; partly to schools' (and districts') habit of pursuing projects instead of sustained, integrated reform; and partly to organizational dysfunction. There most often is no one within a school's leadership structure whose job is to align its myriad partners – except the principal, who lacks the time to do so effectively.

The state must not only support the capacity of outside providers to assist with turnaround (or lead the process); it must create the structures and policies necessary to ensure that single providers act as systems integrators, coordinating the roles and contributions of other collaborating partners (see the graphic on page 85). Turnaround partners can include non-profit and for-profit organizations, professional associations, and colleges and universities. In addition, an important role of any partner serving the "systems integrator" role in turnaround schools is establishing strong connections with social service providers and agencies, which tend to play strong, visible roles in the communities served by chronically under-performing schools.

These social services help provide important counterweights to the effects of poverty on families and children through home visiting, workforce training, high-quality child care and early education, after-school programs, substance abuse treatment, community policing, and homelessness prevention strategies. All of these supports, following the high-performing, high-poverty (HPHP) Readiness model we developed in Part 2 of this report, are part of the set of services that enable high-poverty students to be *ready to learn*. While they cannot realistically all be managed through one lead partner organization, their work can play a critical role in high-poverty school success. Lead turnaround partners and school leaders need the latitude and the opportunity to work with them effectively.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ State creates an RFP for turnaround assistance from lead turnaround partners, i.e., organizations that would act as the integrator for other partners in supporting the creation and implementation of a turnaround plan, on behalf of schools or school clusters. Idea is to galvanize the creation of such partner organizations, filling the capacity gap that exists right now.

▶ State turnaround regulations require districts to work with state-approved lead turnaround partners in developing and executing their plans.

▶ State initiative supports capacity-building and practice-sharing among turnaround partner organizations.

▶ *Emphasis*: This isn't a radical new idea by any means. It's simply the turnaround corollary of contractual relationships schools and districts already have with outside providers (e.g., textbook publishers).

By the time a school reaches NCLB's restructuring stage, it has probably hosted literally dozens of separate reform programs and partners, with little or no integration happening to form a coherent whole.

Sample Turnaround Costs: $50 Million for 50 Schools in Turnaround Zones

The cost of school turnaround will vary by school, based on size and its own particular needs. Experience to date with turnaround initiatives suggests costs in the range of $250,000 to a million dollars per school per year over the first three years, in order to implement a turnaround effort incorporating the strategies discussed in this report. As an illustrative example, an effective state initiative serving 50 persistently under-performing schools in turnaround "zones" is likely to include costs such as those in the following table.

Estimated Annual Costs of Turnaround

	Estimated Average Cost per School	Estimated Annual Cost for 50-School Turnaround Initiative
3.0 FTEs of support personnel (up to five or more specialists)	$270,000	$13,500,000
Incentive and responsibility-based compensation	120,000 average for E/M/H	6,000,000
Lead turnaround partner assistance; staff & leadership development; curriculum materials and related	200,000	10,000,000
Funding for extended time (one hour/day)	288,000 average for E/M/H	14,400,000
Average school total	**878,000**	**43,900,000**
Coordinating turnaround agency staff, research/design, operations, partner support, program evaluation		5,000,000
Total annual costs for 50 schools		**$48,900,000**

These costs reflect the following assumptions and factors:

Support Personnel
Support personnel configuration would vary by school need, and include full- or part-time people with skills central to the turnaround mission, such as a turnaround leader, math coach, data analyst, or social-service program leader. Large schools, obviously, would require more support staff than smaller schools. (The table is based on a school with 500 students.) In general, comprehensive high schools will be more expensive propositions than middle schools, which will in turn be more expensive than elementary schools – because of size and the complexity of the turnaround work involved. Some specialists may be employed by the district, but some would be on-the-ground practitioners from the lead turnaround partner. Note: the totals here reflect estimates for the costs of turnaround, without specifying the state and district (or private) share of those costs. States should assume average district per-pupil spending in these schools at a minimum, and might well require districts to provide an annually rising share of the additional costs.

Incentive and Responsibility-Based Compensation
Turnaround schools will need to pay for the turnaround expertise of their principals and leadership team, as well as to attract high quality teaching and support staff; compensate for extra responsibilities; and change incentive structures at the school. We have assumed extra compensation at an average of $3,000 per faculty member (including the principal), but not necessarily that it is distributed evenly.

Lead Turnaround Partner, Professional Development, and Curriculum
Additional support for the work of the lead turnaround partner, professional development (school-based and across districts to build turnaround management capacity), diagnostic assessment and data analysis expertise, teaching and social service skills, as well as related curriculum and program costs, would be provided on a percentage basis staked to student enrollment. For the purposes of this example, an average of $200,000 per school has been allotted.

Funding for Extended Time
In addition, schools would receive funding separately to pay for extended time, one of the cornerstones of HPHP performance. Assuming 30 elementary, 15 middle, and 5 high schools in the mix of 50 schools in this imagined state example, the addition of one hour per day, and 37 operating weeks per year to the school calendar, the cost of this extra time would total $14.4 million ($5.4/elementaries, $5.4/middle schools, $3.6/high schools).

Turnaround Agency Operations
The cost of the state's turnaround coordinating agency includes all costs of the administering of the work, including staff and operating costs, administering state policy, creating the turnaround models, supporting the turnaround partners, shaping the development of turnaround leadership, and providing for program evaluation. (For more on the state turnaround initiative administration, see Part 4.)

Sources of Revenue for Turnaround
Many states, compelled by NCLB, are directing some funds to school intervention initiatives. Our researchers universally heard complaints that funding for the work was insufficient. The costs outlined here, multiplied across the many dozens and in some cases, hundreds of schools entering Restructuring, add up to a sizable annual investment. States can look to foundation help for innovation and pilot model-building, but the scale-up can only happen through sustained commitment of public dollars. Federal reauthorization of NCLB may produce a substantial portion of the required investment. States will need to justify the remainder on the grounds that money invested here will be matched (as research has shown) many times over by savings in social service costs down the road; the need to build a high-skill workforce to remain nationally and globally competitive; and as a civil rights obligation to provide an adequate education to all children, regardless of income or race.

A Framework *(continued)*

CLUSTERING FOR SUPPORT:
Organizing the Change

6 **Effective turnaround solutions focus on producing change at the school level – and through it to the level of classroom instruction**. That is where reform is shown to be meaningful and productive – or not. In the absence of a relentless school-level focus, it is too easy for "deck-chair-rearranging" syndrome to set in: reorganization that for all of its good intentions, fails to exert much impact in classrooms or, ultimately, on learning.

However, turnaround work is best organized in clusters of schools, working in partnership with school districts and partners, in order to meet the scale of the need. While turnaround solutions need to focus on instituting change at the school level, a number of factors – the number of schools

Individual school turnaround successes are heroic. Turnaorund success across multiple schools is strategic –and necessary.

requiring assistance; resource-efficiency; replication of successful models; and establishment of effective K-12 pathways through school-level feeder patterns – indicate the value and importance of designing and implementing turnaround work in clusters of schools. (In these ways, clusters have all of the same advantages as school districts. They should be large enough to be an enterprise, to paraphrase researcher and project advisor Rick Hess, but small enough to succeed – and to avoid issues that can arise as bureaucracies grow.)

Clustered turnaround work can be approached **vertically** (focusing on successful transitions for students from their elementary through their high school years), or **horizontally** (by type – for example,

urban middle schools or alternative high schools for at-risk students and dropouts). Organization of the work can take several forms:

- Within single districts conducting turnaround on behalf of a cohort of under-performing schools (or multiple cohorts, in districts pursuing a portfolio of different approaches with different governance and/or management structures)

- Across two to four districts, organized and supported by the state, where combined turnaround work makes sense because of geographic proximity or because the work focuses on schools that share particular attributes

- Across a larger number of districts, each of which has just one or two chronically under-performing schools, or where the state wants to encourage implementation of particular school models and approaches – for example, grade 6-12 academies.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ State initiative, working together with district leaders, organizes turnaround schools into clusters as described above.

▶ Clusters of turnaround schools implement their turnaround strategies under the operating conditions and other criteria set by the state for the statewide turnaround zone.

▶ Clusters are served by lead turnaround partners assigned by the state (or recruited by districts), who integrate and align the services of other outside providers in the implementation of the plan.

▶ Clusters might also include higher-performing, volunteer schools that match the profile of the schools needing assistance, thereby providing models and change-colleagues for the turnaround schools.

▶ *Emphasis*: Individual school turnaround successes are heroic. Turnaorund success across multiple schools is strategic – and necessary.

7 **Effective turnaround at scale requires a transparent, deliberate blending of "loose" and "tight" control in implementation and design**. The changes in operating conditions outlined above are necessary to allow the people closest to the work to have a strong say in how it is done. The HPHP schools and turnaround exemplars vividly demonstrate the importance of school-based decision-making authority and school-wide commitment to reform. But leaving all decision-making authority up to the schools – as in the charter model – makes little sense in a turnaround context. In constructing a turnaround zone like that described in #3, above, states have the opportunity to mix **"loose"** (providing latitude) and **"tight"** (controlling more systematically within the cluster, often through the application of leverage) in, for example, the following ways:

- **"Loose"** in allowing school/district leaders to develop their own turnaround plans; **"tight"** in insisting on certain essential elements and, in some cases, on working with an outside partner to produce the plan;

- **"Loose"** in extending to districts an opportunity to use altered conditions and additional resources to intervene successfully in their struggling schools; **"tight"** in holding them accountable for performance improvements within two years and reserving the ultimate authority to install alternate governance in the school;

- **"Loose"** in enabling school leaders to shape their staff and implement turnaround strategy as they see fit; **"tight"** in insisting on certain parameters for the work and to organize some aspects of turnaround centrally – either by the school district or by a systems-integrating turnaround partner leading a cluster of schools across district lines.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ State turnaround criteria (see #3 on page 73) empower school turnaround leaders to make ground-level judgments on design and overall approach, and in the execution of the turnaround strategies – but within the framework for turnaround established by the state.

▶ Districts judged by the state to have sufficient capacity (in conjunction with a lead turnaround partner) and that have been able to produce turnaround plans that meet the state's criteria may be granted more latitude, with less state oversight, in implementing the plan. (See #8, next page.)

▶ *Emphasis*: Turnaround depends on a deliberate blend of structured, systematic program strategies ("tight") and school control and ownership ("loose").

The whole point is to motivate districts and schools to undertake comprehensive turnaround themselves. The keys are the positive incentives in joining the turnaround zone – and the matching incentive to avoid the more unappealing alternative of deeper state management authority.

A Framework *(continued)*

8 **States should differentiate their support by the degree of local capacity – and allow districts and schools to volunteer into a turnaround zone.** Some districts and schools are better equipped to undertake comprehensive turnaround – along the lines required by the state's turnaround plan criteria – than others. Partly for reasons of scale and limited resources, partly to raise capacity for turnaround statewide, and partly on the principle of "loose" where authority has been earned and "tight" where it has not, states should match the degree of their involvement in the design and implementation of turnaround in inverse proportion to the degree of local capacity to undertake the work.

Moreover, states can accomplish several aims by opening up the turnaround zone to volunteer schools and districts ready to undertake "pre-emptive turnaround." Superintendents clamor for the ability to intervene more vigorously in schools *before* they have entered the most extreme categories of under-performance under state and NCLB accountability systems. Schools that are not yet in the bottom five percent but that are proactively looking to undertake fundamental change will improve the mix in their turnaround cluster. Their presence will help underline the positive positioning states will be seeking to give to the entire initiative, and they could be useful "colleagues" for other schools in the cluster. The volunteer schools represent an important way for states to scale up the impact of their turnaround zone, as well.
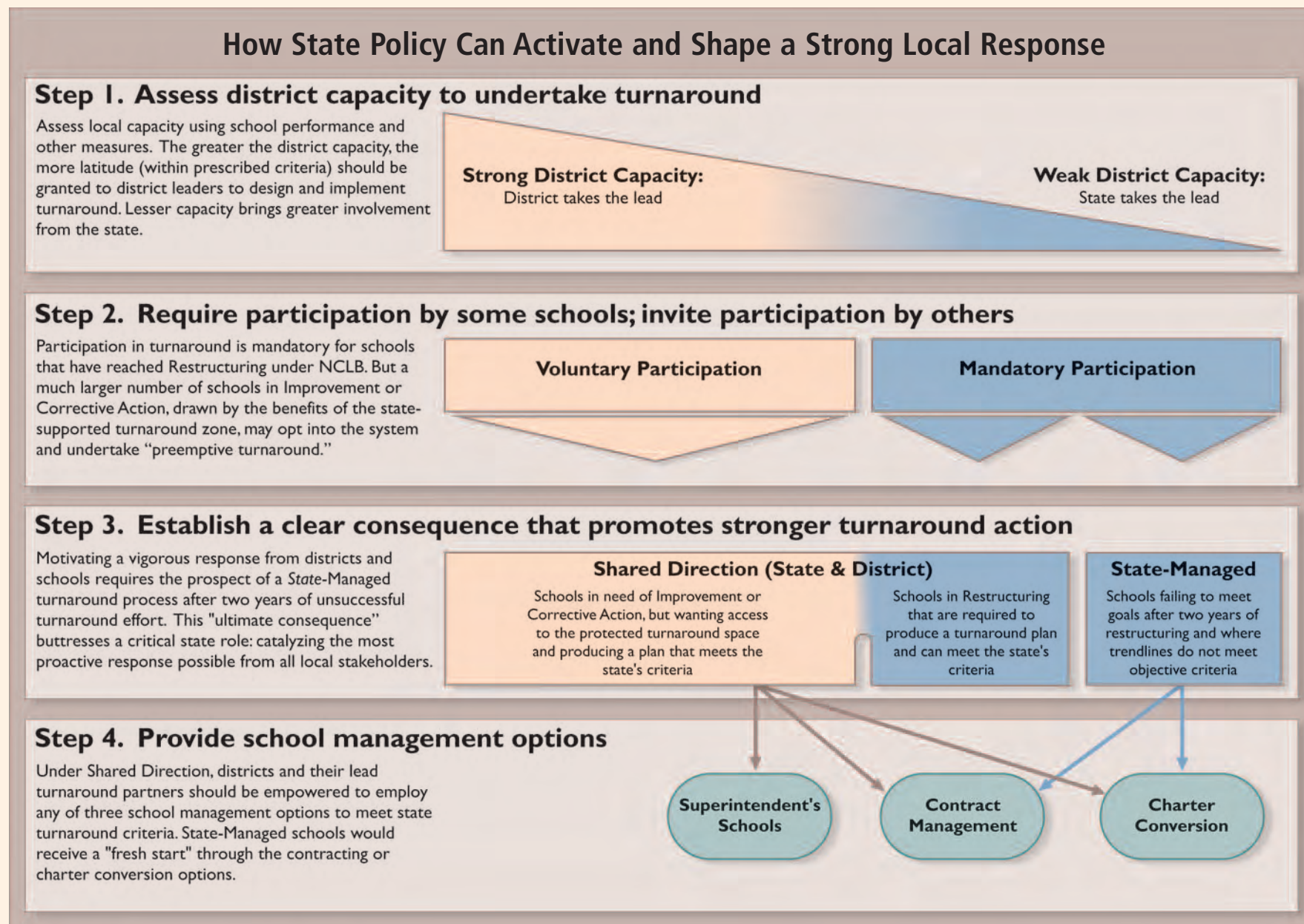
The state's protected space for turnaround would thus be differentiated in two different ways, as shown in the chart at right: first by voluntary vs. mandatory participation, and then by management authority. "Shared Direction" means that management of the turnaround would be conducted by district, school, and turnaround partner personnel (through contracts that can include whole-school management and charter conversion), but within the turnaround criteria required by the state. "State-Managed" means the state would directly subcontract management authority to a turnaround partner or charter school operator.

The whole point is to motivate districts and schools to undertake comprehensive turnaround themselves. The keys are the positive incentives in joining the turnaround zone – and the matching incentive to avoid the more unappealing alternative of deeper state management authority.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ See the chart at right. State initiative has two broad categories for participation: Voluntary and Mandatory.

▶ **Voluntary**: for schools in NCLB's "Improvement" or "Corrective Action" categories that want access to changing conditions of a state-protected turnaround zone – and can produce a turnaround plan (potentially with a partner) that meets state criteria. State would not necessarily provide monitoring beyond regular AYP processes for these schools, though it might provide guidance and additional resources and supports.

▶ **Mandatory**: for schools in Corrective Action or Restructuring that the state *requires* to implement turnaround with a lead partner. These schools would receive the full benefit of additional resources and supports.

▶ State makes every effort to support and enable local management of turnaround within the turnaround criteria ("Shared Direction" in the chart); reserves the alternative of management change for schools that a) cannot produce a plan that meets the state's criteria or b) produce an adequate plan but then fail to meet achievement goals and other benchmarks over two years. State would mandate, at that point, use of an outside partner for school management under contract or through charter conversion (perhaps using a close-and-reopen strategy). Contract period of five years, with annual performance benchmarks.

▶ *Emphasis*: This initiative provides local leaders with their last, best shot at turning around failing schools, and gives them the tools they need to succeed.

How State Policy Can Activate and Shape a Strong Local Response

Step 1. Assess district capacity to undertake turnaround

Assess local capacity using school performance and other measures. The greater the district capacity, the more latitude (within prescribed criteria) should be granted to district leaders to design and implement turnaround. Lesser capacity brings greater involvement from the state.

Strong District Capacity:
District takes the lead

Weak District Capacity:
State takes the lead

Step 2. Require participation by some schools; invite participation by others

Participation in turnaround is mandatory for schools that have reached Restructuring under NCLB. But a much larger number of schools in Improvement or Corrective Action, drawn by the benefits of the state-supported turnaround zone, may opt into the system and undertake "preemptive turnaround."

Voluntary Participation

Mandatory Participation

Step 3. Establish a clear consequence that promotes stronger turnaround action

Motivating a vigorous response from districts and schools requires the prospect of a *State*-Managed turnaround process after two years of unsuccessful turnaround effort. This "ultimate consequence" buttresses a critical state role: catalyzing the most proactive response possible from all local stakeholders.

Shared Direction (State & District)

Schools in need of Improvement or Corrective Action, but wanting access to the protected turnaround space and producing a plan that meets the state's criteria

Schools in Restructuring that are required to produce a turnaround plan and can meet the state's criteria

State-Managed

Schools failing to meet goals after two years of restructuring and where trendlines do not meet objective criteria

Step 4. Provide school management options

Under Shared Direction, districts and their lead turnaround partners should be empowered to employ any of three school management options to meet state turnaround criteria. State-Managed schools would receive a "fresh start" through the contracting or charter conversion options.

Superintendent's Schools

Contract Management

Charter Conversion

5

A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL TURNAROUND

This graphic presents, in four steps, how states can use an intensive turnaround strategy focused on the most poorly-performing schools (the bottom 5%, or fewer) to catalyze proactive local response on behalf of those schools – *and* the much larger number of schools that have been identified for state intervention at lesser levels of intensity. Schools that are mandated to implement the state-defined turnaround process could do so under Shared Direction, if they and their lead partner can produce a plan that meets the state's criteria. Schools not yet mandated to implement the process can opt into it, undertaking "preemptive turnaround" using the benefits of the state's protected turnaround space. In both cases, state policy has catalyzed a more proactive local response.

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Organizing the State Role:
What is required to enable an effective, state-led turnaround initiative?

EFFECTIVE STATEWIDE COORDINATION:
A Different Kind of Agency
to Address a Different Kind of Challenge

9 **The state must free itself to be able to undertake this work.** A visible agency within the Department of Education with a high-profile leader, or perhaps better, a special public/private authority (modeled, for example, on agencies created by some states to take on infrastructure challenges) would be well-positioned to recruit high-quality managers and to implement more effectively the various roles the state would play in organizing turnaround:

- **Creating the changes in rules and regulations** governing the work within these schools to bring about the appropriate, enabling condition-set, rather than leaving these sometimes difficult changes to local decision-makers and/or risking the fracturing of local stakeholder relationships over their implementation

- **Distributing targeted resources** as appropriate and ensuring that local districts are investing at least its average per-pupil expenditure in these schools

- **Investing strategically in capacity development**, both internally in districts and schools and among external providers of turnaround assistance:

  - Supporting the development of educational turnaround leadership as a discipline with a particular skill set

  - Supporting the development of a marketplace of high-capacity providers to assist districts and schools with turnaround work, and district efforts to create effective turnaround support offices of their own

  - Creating an improved pipeline of high-capacity, well-prepared educators over the long-term.

- **Ensuring the quality of school turnaround plans and the capacity of the implementation team** by providing models and monitoring the work

- **Building a framework to provide these supports** that is unfettered by the regulatory and bureaucratic weights that sometimes handicap state government initiatives; that provides differentiated support based on the assessed needs of school districts with chronically under-performing schools and their capacity to undertake successful turnaround; and that can ensure that the work is scaled sufficiently to meet the statewide need.

Building the Framework:
New Structures for States, Districts, and Providers

What This Might Look Like:

▸ Proposal for new coordinating agency is created as core element in overall turnaround strategy for the state. (See Figure 5F.)

▸ State education agency leaders enlisted as supporters as a way of garnering the necessary authorities, flexibilities to undertake the strategy.

▸ Agency is included in legislative package and/or budget line item as a requirement for increased funding for turnaround.

▸ *Emphasis*: The state needs the same level of operating flexibility to coordinate turnaround work as schools need to implement it effectively on the ground.

The state needs the same level of operating flexibility to coordinate turnaround work as schools need to implement it effectively on the ground.
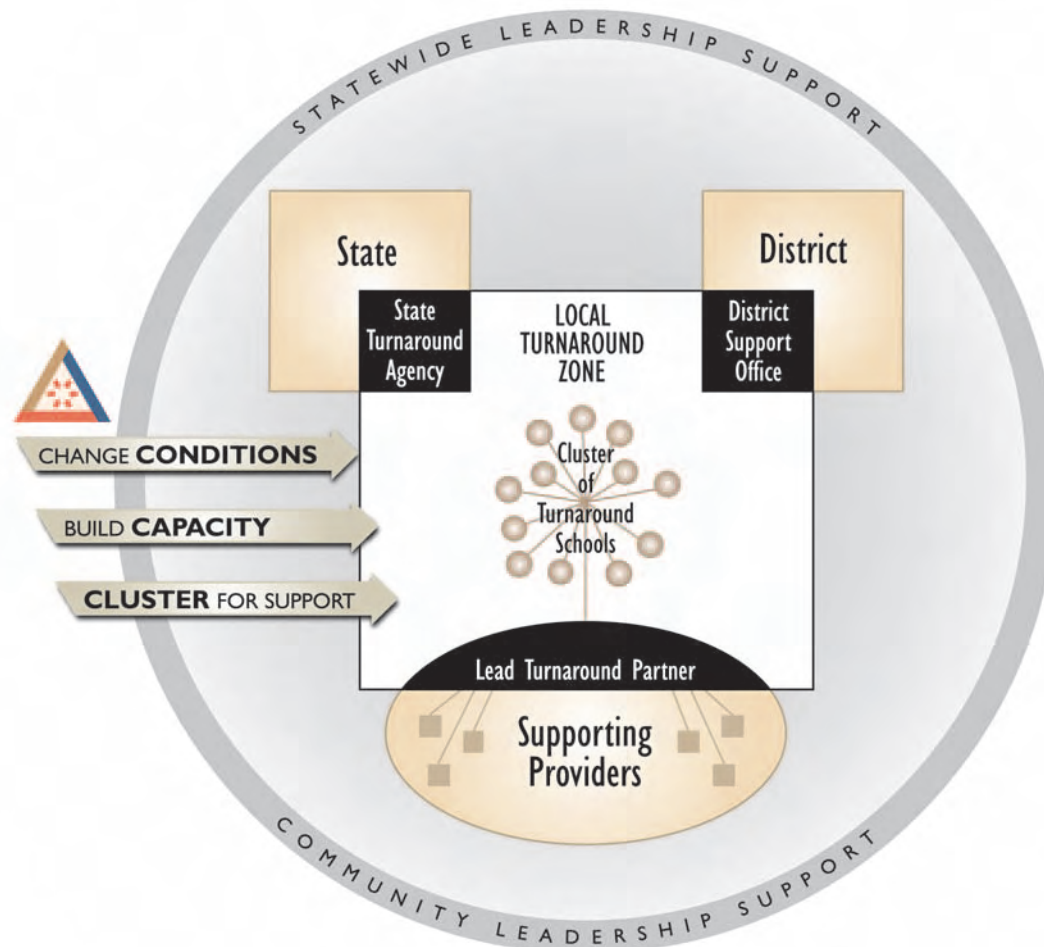
States, districts, and the outside provider community all need new organizational structures in order for turnaround work to succeed at scale. At the state and district level, turnaround management must have more operating flexibility than current structures tend to allow. Among providers, lead turnaround partners should work with schools to integrate the too-often confusing array of projects, consultants, and related support from the state and community into a coherent, achievable turnaround strategy.

A Framework *(continued)*

STATEWIDE & COMMUNITY COALITIONS:
The Necessary Leadership Consensus

10 **Tough challenges require tough – and united – leadership.** While some effective turnaround work may take place in scattered locales, states under NCLB cannot leave it to accidents of good fortune or geography to assure the right of every child to receive an adequate education. The state can and should play an active role in enabling scaled-up turnaround of chronically under-performing schools. The politics here are challenging, because under-performing schools have no natural constituency; parents and local leaders generally tend to shy away from the dramatic restructuring of traditional local schools. Turnaround advocates must therefore seek to create a statewide leadership coalition in their state – one that conceivably includes the governor, legislative leaders, the chief state school officer, state board of education, urban superintendents, and leaders from the state's foundation, non-profit, higher-education, and business communities, as well as from the media. Such a coalition is necessary in order to produce the policy changes and sustained funding commitments (see Figure 5D) necessary for effective turnaround.

Coalition-building at the grassroots level is important as well, in order to sustain leadership support in the legislature and to build community connection to, and ownership of, the goal and process of building a higher-performing local school. Community buy-in is particularly essential in the second phase of turnaround – the improvement phase, when new investments are reduced and change (along with achievement gain) is more incremental. In cities where long lists of parents wait for openings in magnet and/or charter schools, they represent a potentially potent advocacy group for highly visible, comprehensive turnaround of under-performing schools.

What This Might Look Like:

▶ Lead advocate for comprehensive turnaround of failing schools (governor, commissioner, state board chair, key legislator, leading CEO or foundation head) initiates high-level discussions with potential allies, creates workgroup.

▶ Workgroup assembles turnaround experts; builds a case for turnaround, using statewide research and strategies from *The Turnaround Challenge.*

▶ Workgroup identifies a driver for this turnaround coalition – an existing statewide organization, foundation, or consortium – or establishes one. Coalition driver adopts comprehensive turnaround as a central goal.

▶ Key advocates and decision-makers are identified and enlisted.

▶ Media effort showcases gaps between highest and lowest performing schools (with similar high-poverty demographics) in the state.

▶ Outreach to key superintendents, school board chairs, and mayors in affected districts to secure their support, to statewide teacher union managers, and to other teacher leaders statewide.

▶ Twin strategies, working with the state education agency and state board of education, to generate necessary changes in state regulations on school intervention and enlist state legislature to support the changes (if necessary).

▶ Intensive lobbying effort during legislative budgeting cycle to secure adequate funding for turnaround.

▶ *Emphasis*: Turnaround of failing schools is a civil rights obligation and economic/social imperative of the state.

Introduction to the Framework   Defining the Approach   The Three 'C' Strategies   Organizing the State Role

Meeting the Turnaround Challenge: A Framework for Statewide Action

Turnaround Requires:

New Approaches within Turnaround Zones

Changing Conditions
Authority to act over staff, time, budget, program
Incentives motivating dramatic reform

Building Capacity
Targeted, sustained state funds and resources
Focus on turnaround expertise in partners, schools, and districts

Clustering for Support
Collaborative networks by school type, partner, region
Reforms integrated through lead turnaround partner

New Support Structures at All Levels

State Turnaround Agency
Same operational flexibility for state management as for school implementation

District Support Office
"Mini-district" network support in collaboration with lead turnaround partners

Lead Turnaround Partners
Integrator of services, intensive full-time engagement in turnaround schools

New Commitment among Leadership Groups

Statewide Coalition
Officeholders, policymakers, educators, business, foundations, non-profits

Community Coalitions
Superintendents, school boards, school/teacher leaders, community leaders, parents
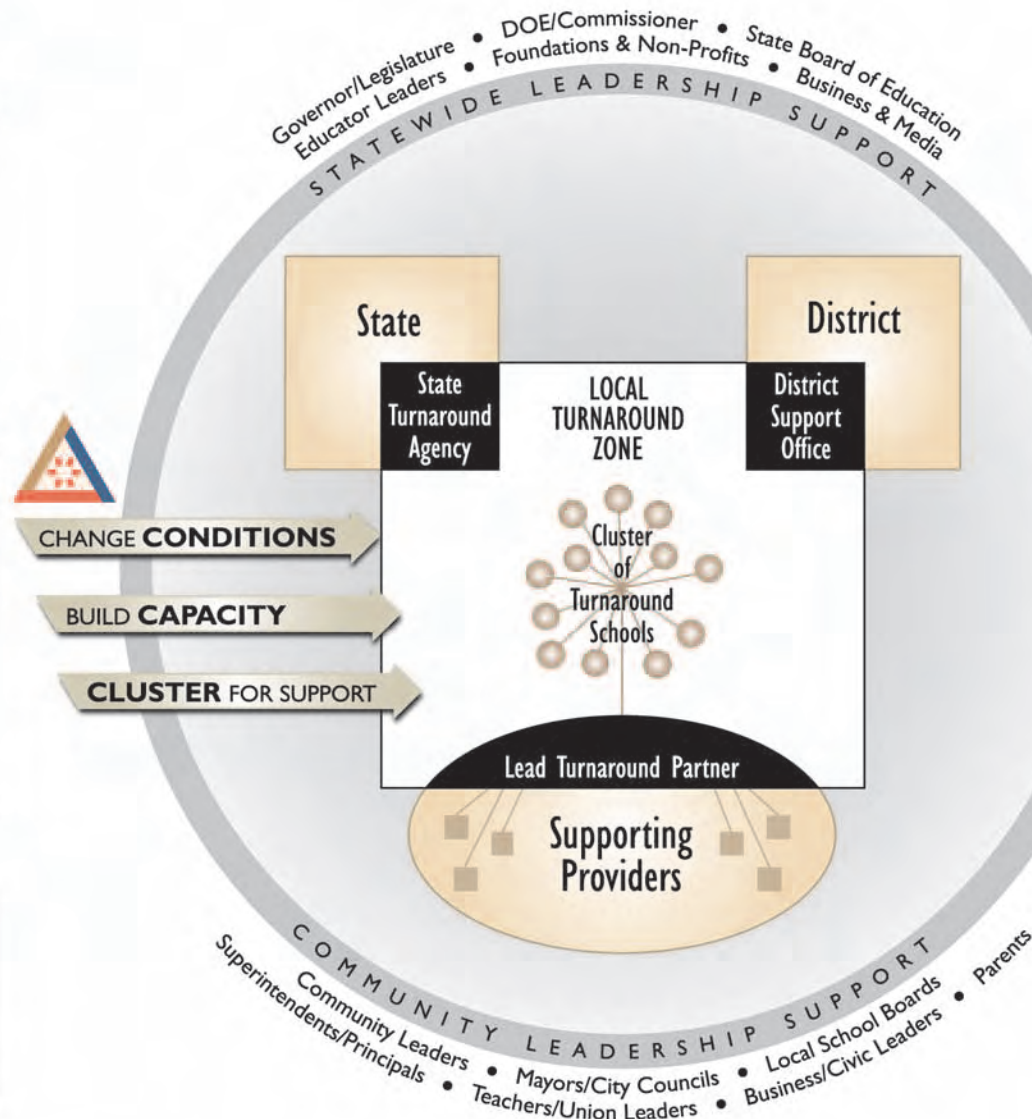
The Complete Framework: A comprehensive state initiative depends on every one of the structures indicated here. Statewide and community leadership coalitions and consensus (outer ring) are needed to drive the necessary policy changes and targeted public funding. The centerpiece of the initiative is the establishment of protected space for local turnaround zones, where the three 'C' reforms – changing conditions, building capacity, and clustering for support – suggested by our "Readiness" triangle-model research into high-performing, high-poverty schools can gain traction. In order for those reforms to be implemented effec-tively, each of the primary turnaround agents (the state, the district, and outside providers, along with the schools themselves) needs to adopt new structures and approaches (repre-sented by the darkly-colored areas where these agents overlap with the turnaround zones. States and districts need special sub-agencies dedicated to turnaround; providers need to be aligned by lead turnaround partners. The schools need fundamentally new approaches, assisted by all of the agents.

A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL TURNAROUND

5

The Tough Questions, Revisited
"Can Turnaround Be Successful at Our School?"
A Ten-Point Audit for Policymakers (and Manifesto for Principals)

This set of questions is the school-building-level corollary to the "12 Tough Questions" that opened this report. It can serve as a short set of indicators for use by policymakers and turnaround advocates: *Are* the operating conditions and supports in place that would allow principals and leadership teams to successfully turn around a failing school? It could (and should) also be used by principals being asked to undertake school turnaround: Do I have what I need – and what any turnaround manager would need – to be successful? If not....

1. Have you and key members of your staff had a leadership role in shaping your school turnaround plan? Has the planning team benefited significantly from knowledgeable outside support? Has the process moved swiftly in order to meet an external deadline, and has it been driven in part by clear guidelines and criteria set by the state?

2. Is your work supported by a lead turnaround partner that, in your judgment, will help put your school in the best possible position to meet your student achievement goals? Does your district, state, community, or partner provide you with support services tailored to high-poverty settings and to your school's priorities?

3. Do you and your school's lead turnaround partner have the authority to shape school staff so as to implement the plan? In the following HR areas, can you use these (among other) practices drawn from research in high-performance, high-poverty schools?

   • Recruiting, hiring and placement: freedom from seniority rules, bumping and force-placing; ability to adjust positions to suit student needs

   • Removal: discretion to excess teachers who are not performing or are unwilling to participate fully in the turnaround plan

   • Compensation: ability to differentiate through incentives to attract high quality teachers and/or performance- or responsibility-related pay

4. Do you, your partner, and your leadership team have the authority (and resources) to adjust your school's schedule to suit the needs of your students and instructional approach?

5. Do you and your turnaround leadership team have discretion over budget allocation to support your mission? Is your turnaround plan sufficiently supported by extra funding and outside resources? Are those resources sufficient to provide for substantial planning, collaboration, and training time for staff?

6. Do you have the authority to adjust curriculum and programming to suit your school's priorities and support the turnaround plan, within a larger framework of program-related decisions made by your district or cluster/network? Are you free to make choices and respond to crises with a minimum of compliance-driven oversight?

7. Do you have the authority to shape the way your school works by creating teacher leadership positions and differentiating responsibilities? Will you and your leadership team be provided, as part of the turnaround plan, with professional development to increase your expertise in turnaround management?

8. Do you currently have the technology, systems, and analysis expertise necessary to implement the frequent formative assessment and feedback that is central to increasing performance in high-risk populations?

9. Will you be provided, as part of your turnaround status, with the support of a network of schools involved in similar turnaround initiatives, along with higher-performing schools that can serve as colleagues and models?

10. Do you feel that you have been provided with unambiguous expectations and clear measures of accountability to help you bring urgency to the work of turning around student performance at your school?

APPENDICES

A.1 School Intervention to Date: Goals, Strategies, and Impact

We know where we want to go. The journey's the issue.

Line up 100 reform-experienced educators and researchers in a room, ask them to write down their own top ten elements of effective standards-based reform, and odds are that you'll see 80% agreement across their lists.

We haven't proved that clinically – but it seems quite plausible from our exhaustive scan of the effective-practice and intervention literature. Adherence to standards and high expectations; effective mapping of curricula to those standards; a professional and collaborative teaching culture; in-school, job-embedded professional development; strong school leadership (individuals and teams); on-going formative assessment; data-based decision-making; proactive intervention for students who need extra help; productive connections with social services, parents and community… There is general consensus on the importance of these dimensions of effective schools, and an acknowledgement that within this palette, actual implementation can appear in a wide range of colors.

In other words, we know it when we see it. But getting there – the whole change management process – is much more of a mystery.

Change management in education is chronically under-studied. That's ironic, for an enterprise that is so focused on human dynamics and personal development. Turnaround in other domains, especially business, is the object of much careful scrutiny. There are lessons to be learned from this work – though with caution, because of the substantial differences between the private and the public sectors.

Our Intervention Taxonomy (included in Parts 4 and 5) introduced the three general categories we have developed for this analysis of school intervention strategies. They are:

- **Program Change:** *Providing help to improve programs and performance within the current set of systems and conditions.* This constitutes the major portion of school intervention activity to date. This approach offers consultants, assistance teams, professional development, or new curricula and other program-related tools to help existing school personnel improve their students' performance, primarily (though not necessarily) within the current general model of teaching and learning employed by the school.

> *"While 39 states have the authority to take strong actions, and while these same 39 states contain dozens of failing schools that have not appreciably improved for years, we still find strong interventions extremely rare."*
> *– Researcher Ronald Brady*

- **People Change:** *Reconstitution – the replacement of leadership and school staff.* The core idea here is that the caliber of the people working in the system is the most important element to success (which may be the right idea, except when it also is the only idea being applied).

- **System Redesign:** *Changing the conditions and incentives that shape how work gets done – as well as allowing for changes in programming and personnel.* This cumulative category includes the other two, but also redesigns the operating conditions in which staff and leadership implement programs and reform strategies.

These categories mirror, in general, the several others that have been developed and used by other researchers examining the emerging track record in school interventions under NCLB (among others: Brady, 2003; DiBiase, 2005). Brady's analysis, conducted for the Fordham Foundation in the early years of the law's implementation, provides a useful grouping of intervention strategies

mandated by NCLB (see box). Our grouping, described in more detail over the following pages, emphasizes interventions' impact on the daily life of schools, more than on questions of governance. We discuss governance and management more fully in Part 4.

The interventions in the "Mild" and "Moderate" categories, these and other reports make clear, are conducted much more frequently than those in the "Strong" category for several reasons. There are great

political uncertainties and the risk of significant political costs associated with them (witness Maryland's effort to take over several under-performing schools in Baltimore in 2005-6, which was undercut by the mayor and the state legislature – see the Supplemental Report for more). In addition, there are virtually no "reward" incentives in place to

motivate educators and policymakers to undertake such a risky effort. As Brady puts it, "While 39 states have the authority to take strong actions, and while these same 39 states contain dozens of failing schools that have not appreciably improved for years, we still find strong interventions extremely rare." (Brady, 2003) DiBiase's study follows Brady's by more than two years but it does not have importantly different conclusions. Given the option to do so, people and

Given the option to do so, people and organizations (even those in some distress) will tend toward less change, rather than more – with perhaps predictable results.

organizations (even those in some distress) will tend toward less change, rather than more – with perhaps predictable results, as we shall see over the following pages.

Why *Program Change* Falls Short of Turnaround

Providing help to improve programs is vital – and insufficient by itself

Program Change is by far the most common state and district response to underperformance in schools. This category encompasses a range of approaches, but what ties them together is the idea of external assistance to incumbent school staff, with the aim of improving their performance and/or installing

> *"Assigning Highly Skilled Educators for more years in these schools is unlikely to increase HSE success unless other conditions change."*
>
> *– David et al, 2003*

new education programming – curricula, instructional approaches, assessments and the like. Two kinds of external assistance have been most prevalent: direct state help with developing and implementing a school improvement plan, and "comprehensive school reform" using an external model provider.
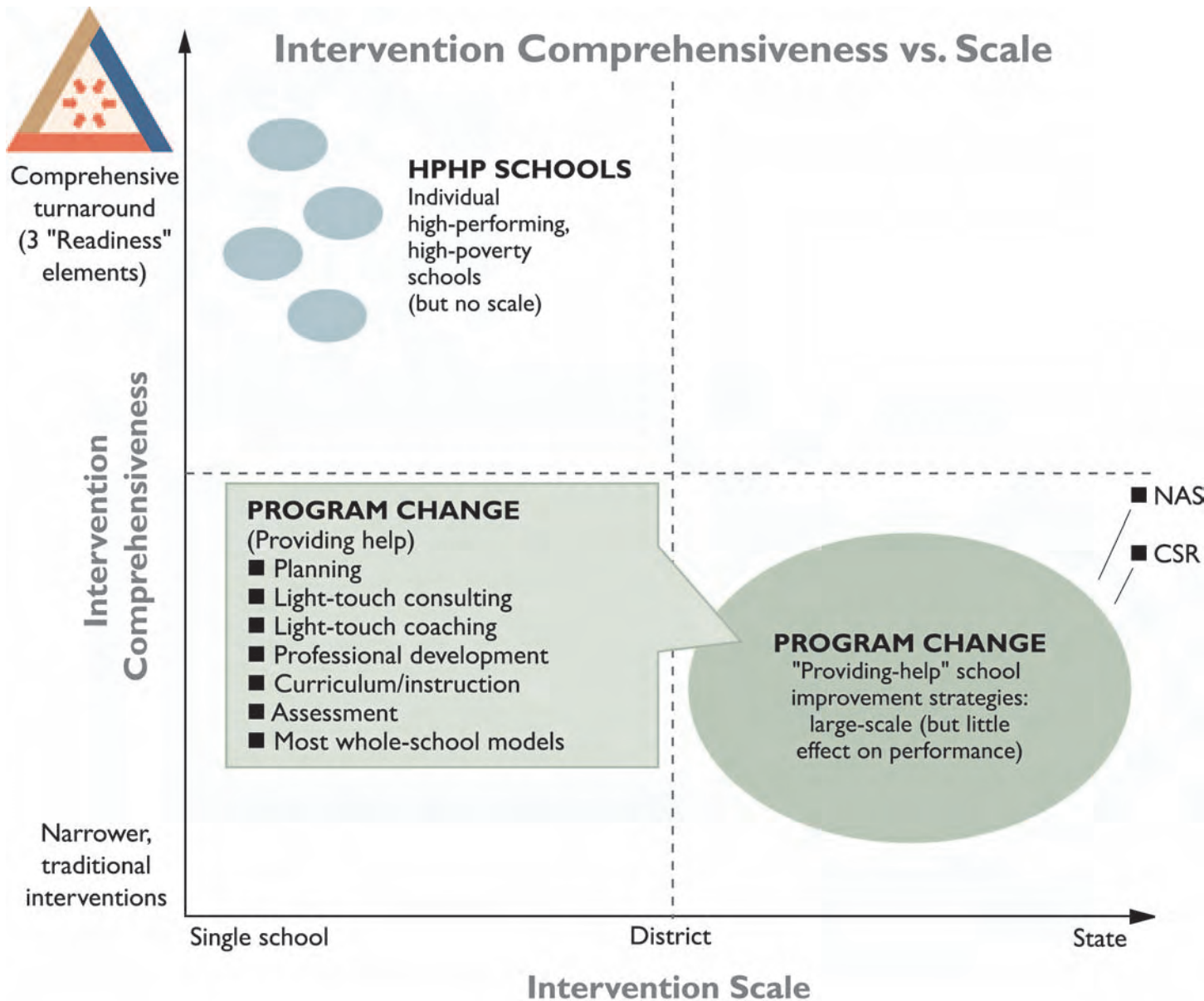
Direct State Assistance

Researchers have posited that there are three broad categories in which states attempt to shape the content of school improvement efforts. (Lane & Gracia, 2005; Laguarda, 2003) These are:

- Needs assessments

- Improvement planning

- Implementation support.

States have chosen to organize this kind of intervention work differently. Massachusetts has had a separate office conducting district and school audits (the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability) that reports to a separate board (the Education Management Audit Council). These reviews or audits are fashioned after the British inspectorate system and are deliberately designed to reflect or monitor a district's or school's condition but not to provide direct assistance. (This system regularly comes under fire from state budget-setters and may in fact be modified this year.) Other states, like North Carolina or Kentucky, do not make such distinctions between those who conduct audits and those who supply assistance.

However organized, implementation support represents all of the efforts that make up a state-approved school improvement plan. Lane & Gracia (2003) provide a particularly useful description and categorization of these supports. (The following is directly quoted from them.)

- **School-based coaching**: Facilitation of school improvement teams; leadership development and mentoring administrators; job-embedded professional development; including modeling instruction

- **School-based data analysis**: Ongoing support to school teams/committees related to the analysis of data planning

- **Professional development**: Professional development targeted towards identified needs (for example, curriculum development and standards alignment, classroom and behavior management, diversity training, etc.)

- **Additional resources**: Some states prioritize federal programs (e.g. Reading First, Comprehensive School Reform) or state-sponsored initiatives to low-performing schools.

The first type of assistance in this list – school-based coaching – represents the most intensive version of this kind of providing help, since it involves direct, ongoing, hands-on work at schools by experienced individuals or teams. Perhaps the most prominent example of this approach is Kentucky's Highly Skilled Educators program (HSE), formerly known as Distinguished Educators (DE). Under Kentucky's accountability system, devised in the early 1990s, schools are required to achieve a certain level of improvement toward meeting proficiency. The lowest-performing schools receive assistance from DEs, now HSEs, beginning with a Scholastic Audit of the school. (David et al, 2003) Evaluators of the HSEs work have broken HSEs' work into seven major categories: professional development, curriculum alignment, classroom instruction, test preparation, leadership, school organization and decision making, and resource procurement.

The most recent available formal evaluation (David et al, 2003) concludes that while the HSE program has an impact on schools served, that impact is limited in two important respects particularly relevant to this analysis.

Providing Help to Accomplish *Program Change*:
Interventions with Great Scale but Modest Impact

Intervention Comprehensiveness vs. Scale

Comprehensive turnaround (3 "Readiness" elements)

Intervention Comprehensiveness

HPHP SCHOOLS
Individual high-performing, high-poverty schools (but no scale)

PROGRAM CHANGE
(Providing help)
■ Planning
■ Light-touch consulting
■ Light-touch coaching
■ Professional development
■ Curriculum/instruction
■ Assessment
■ Most whole-school models

PROGRAM CHANGE
"Providing-help" school improvement strategies: large-scale (but little effect on performance)

■ NAS

■ CSR

Narrower, traditional interventions

Single school — District — State

Intervention Scale

This graphic provides an informal, conceptual "map" of school intervention efforts that we will use over the course of the analysis in this Appendix. The map plots the degree to which different intervention efforts appear to incorporate the three "readiness" dimensions of High-Performing, High-Poverty schools described in Part 2 – along with the HPHP schools themselves – along the Y axis, against the scale of these intervention efforts along the X axis. Interventions in the upper right quadrant are the goal; they would represent the promise of both effectiveness and scale. Interventions in the other three quadrants, conversely, either lack scale-ability or, we would argue, all of the elements required to be successful. The plotting on the map is directional only, and is not staked to numerical values; the intent here is to illustrate broad ideas, not closely comparable data.

Program change initiatives, as shown in this section, have not demonstrated effectiveness in significantly improving performance – particularly in chronically under-performing schools. While some prominent programs, especially the federal government's $1.5 billion Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program and the New American Schools (NAS) initiative have certainly achieved scale, they have not generated the impact their framers envisioned. Nor, by and large, have much smaller program-change initiatives operated by state education agencies. (See the Supplemental Report for more information on selected state programs.)

A.2

Program Change
(continued)

First, on average, HSEs have been more successful at the elementary level than at the middle or high school level. Though the researchers base this finding on a sample of HSE-assisted schools that included only one high school, they do reach some conclusions about the limits of the HSE strategy in the high school setting. Working closely with 10-12 teachers to improve instruction, they argue, is a plausible challenge for an HSE. By contrast, working closely with 40-50 teachers (or more) is probably impossible for one person. An added challenge is the need for an HSE to be a content expert in the various disciplines at the high school or even the middle school level.

Second, the evaluation finds that HSEs had less impact at schools with the lowest capacity – exactly the sort of chronically under-performing schools that are the subject of this analysis. David et al (2003) write: "The impact of HSEs is considerably weaker in schools with the most severe problems with faculty morale, school leadership, and district support – which also tend to be those in the most economically depressed areas." In a sobering statement, the authors conclude, "Assigning HSEs for more

years in these schools is unlikely to increase HSE success unless other conditions change" (p. 27).

Importantly, HSEs have had no authority to change broader conditions. Their role is strictly advisory. There has been one exception in the program's history: for schools labeled "in crisis," due to steep declines in test scores, DEs had the authority to evaluate and recommend dismissal for staff. According to one of the program's architects, however, that power was never implemented (Connie Lestor interview, January 2006).

The Supplemental Report profiles a number of state efforts that fall into this broad category. States such as Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Michigan, Massachusetts, and North Carolina have geared intervention-support strategies around regional school improvement coaches, peer mentors, school improvement specialists, "solutions teams," or "School-Wide Assistance Teams" (also known as SWAT teams). There has been no rigorous, performance-based analysis, at least that we could identify, of these programs and similar initiatives in other states. But our survey uncovered much dissatisfaction in these states with the outcomes of these interven-

tions to date. HSEs and programs modeled after the Kentucky approach, it appears, can be helpful in schools with some level of pre-existing capacity to improve, especially at the elementary level. Their efficacy at higher levels of schooling, and in the particular subset of chronically under-performing schools that we are examining here, appears to be much less promising. In these cases, simply providing expert assistance without the ability to make more substantial changes happen falls short of the magnitude of the task.

school design, and they need an external partner with expertise in the design to help them implement it. CSR achieved prominence in the 1990s under the sponsorship of New American Schools (NAS), a nonprofit that provided funding for the development and scale-up of research-based school designs such as Success For All and Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound. CSR received an enormous boost in the late 1990s when Congress began appropriating funds for a federal Comprehensive School Program – over $1.5 billion through FY2006.

American Institutes for Research… found only three out of the twenty-four whole school [CSR] reform models studied had strong evidence of increased student performance.

Comprehensive School Reform

The other major way states have provided help to under-performing schools is by offering funds to enable schools to adopt "comprehensive school reform" (CSR) models. The idea behind CSR is that high-performing schools typically have a clear, coherent mission and design that guides all of the schools' activities. If schools are failing, they need a new

Since these funds flow through states to schools, every state now has a comprehensive school reform office that administers the program and its brand of program change.

The impact of CSR, however, has been severely limited, especially on chronically low-performing schools. Part of the challenge stemmed from the lack of research base undergirding many of

the comprehensive reform models themselves. American Institutes for Research, for example, found only three out of the twenty-four whole school reform models studied had strong evidence of increased student performance. (AIR, 1999)

Equally troubling have been the difficulties schools have faced in implementing the reforms, even with the massive infusion of funding and support related to CSR. After a decade of implementation and careful evaluation of the NAS effort, RAND researchers (Berends et al, 2002) concluded:

- The hypothesis that adopting a whole school design would lead a school to improve its performance was largely unproved. For many reasons including significant implementation problems, researchers found a lack of strong improvement in most schools in their samples.

- External interventions need to address capacity issues such as lack of teacher capacity, lack of leadership capacity, and a lack of coherent district infrastructure to support such efforts.

- The schools most likely to be targeted by the federal Title I program (for schools serving students in poverty) are most likely to face obstacles to implementing whole school designs to improve student performance.

- Externally developed interventions cannot "break the mold" and be implemented successfully in most districts or schools because these contexts are simply not supportive of these efforts. For example, many districts were unwilling to grant schools the authority needed to allocate funds, people, and time as

In the case of program change in chronically under-performing schools, the "zone of wishful thinking" is vast.

needed to implement the designs. For another, some would not take steps to assign to CSR schools principals supportive of the chosen CSR model.

These findings resemble those cited above related to the direct support provided by HSEs in Kentucky. The comprehensive school designs, like the assistance of HSEs, could only go so far in light of the pre-existing level of capacity in schools and the prevail-

ing conditions in which the schools operated. Since CSR models were generally not themselves designed to change those conditions, they often could not overcome these formidable obstacles. While CSR has had some notable successes, its promise as a "solution" to chronic underperformance has remained unfulfilled.

The Zone of Wishful Thinking

As Paul Hill and Mary Beth Celio have written (1998), every approach to school reform has a "zone of wishful thinking": a set of conditions or actions that are essential to the success of the reform, but that are not

actually brought about by the reform. In the case of program change in chronically under-performing schools, the zone of wishful thinking is vast. It also has two parts. First, for program change to work, the people working in chronically low-performing schools must have the capacity to improve. Not that they must already have all the skills and knowledge necessary to make their schools better; the whole point of providing program-change assistance is to impart

those skills and knowledge. But they must have the capacity to use that assistance well and turn it into significantly different operating approaches and performance results in their schools. Too often, state assistance teams, distinguished educators, and comprehensive model providers have found that school personnel, and especially the leaders of chronically under-performing schools, have lacked that basic capacity. In these cases, the notion that simply providing assistance could turn around these schools was, in fact, wishful thinking.

Second, help is likely to convert to results only if schools are working within conditions that allow and encourage them to activate the advice, to implement what their assistance-providers are suggesting. Without authority to do what helpers advise, and without strong inducements to do so even when change is difficult or controversial, schools may not move forward according to the plans they devise with their assistance-providers.

As a result of these zones of wishful thinking, states and districts have sometimes sought to go beyond program change, as discussed in the following two sections on *people* and *system redesign*.

A.2

A.3 Why *People Change* Falls Short of Turnaround
Providing for new leadership and new staff is also vital – and also insufficient

The second broad category of intervention design focuses on changing people – usually along with changing programs. Because capacity issues have hindered many efforts to provide help to chronically under-performing schools, it is natural that some states and districts have sought to supplement that assistance with actual changes in the people staffing and leading the schools. Given the well-documented importance of both leaders and teachers to the outcomes a school achieves, changing people is a plausible strategy for boosting per-formance. But, as we found with interventions focusing on program change alone, efforts that address peo-ple change (even as part of a larger effort that includes program change) without also addressing the systems and conditions in which people work have not, by and large, produced the desired results.

People-change initiatives, in general, take two forms: bringing in a new principal, and bringing in a more or less entirely new staff for the school ("reconstitution"). These initiatives fall within NCLB's second option. (Note: Another way states have sought to "change people" is to change leader-ship at the district level via state takeovers or by granting control of a

district to the mayor or to a control board. These strategies are most often part of broader initiatives designed to restructure failing districts, and are discussed in the district profiles in the Supplemental Report.)

Changing Leadership
The importance of the school leader in determining a school's success has a long-standing research base and wide acceptance among practitioners. (Waters et al, 2003; Leithwood

> *Turnaround experience in other sectors reinforces an additional point: that managing turnaround effectively requires a particular set of skills, beyond those generally acknowledged to be required for effective leadership.*

et al, 2004) Experience with turn-arounds across industries reinforces this notion, since successful turn-arounds typically involve a change in top management. (Hoffman, 1989) Turnaround experience in other sec-tors reinforces an additional point: that managing turnaround effectively requires a particular set of skills, beyond those generally acknowledged to be required for effective leadership.

At one level, leadership change as a response to low performance in schools is routine – so routine, in fact,
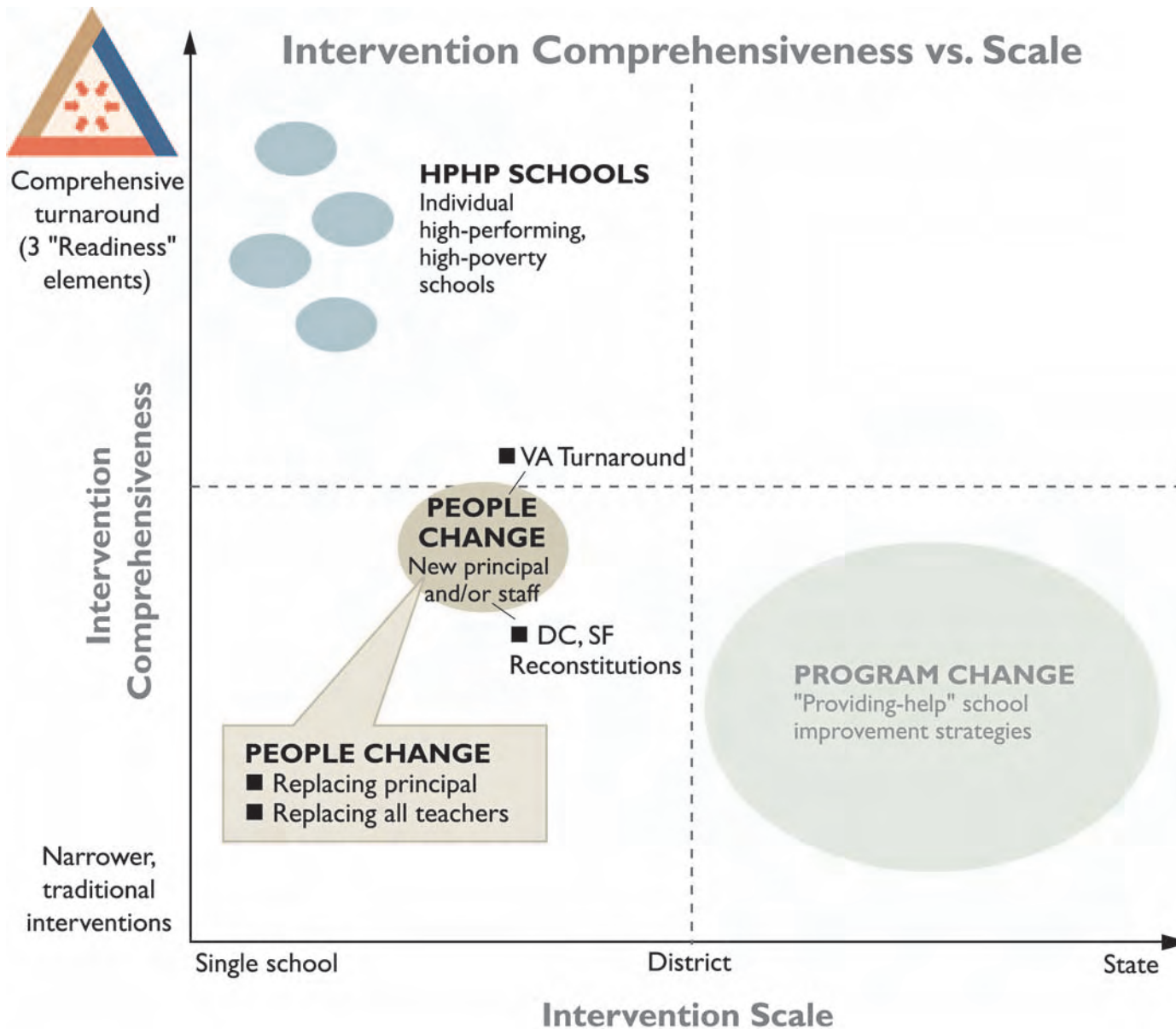
that it has not been documented and studied rigorously. It is therefore impossible to cite a research base about whether, and under what con-ditions, changing a school's leader is likely to lift it out of chronic under-performance. Cross-industry research on turnarounds, however, provides useful insights about two issues: the qualities of leaders who appear most likely to succeed in a turnaround con-text, and the types of actions leaders appear to take en route to turn-arounds that achieve some impact. (Kowal and Hassel, 2005)

Based on these cross-organizational findings, it appears that the most promising "changing leadership" strategies would be those that seek to install new leaders who bring the underlying capabilities of successful turnaround leaders and receive spe-cialized training on turnaround lead-ership actions most likely to lead to success. The leading state-based exem-plar of this approach is the Virginia School Turnaround Specialist

Program (VSTSP), a joint venture of the University of Virginia's schools of business and education. This program identifies high potential turnaround leaders (from among high-performing urban principals) and provides them with specialized training as they take up posts in chronically low-perform-ing schools. Specialists can earn bonuses of $5,000 for completing the training and $8,000 differentials if their schools make AYP, achieve state accreditation, or reduce the failure rate in reading or math by 10%. Differentials of $15,000 are available in years two and three of the principal's work if the school continues to make AYP or obtains state certification. The program initially focused on Virginia, but is now working with three large school districts from other states as well, with assistance from Microsoft Corporation. The program is relatively new, and no external evaluation has been completed yet, although the program has issued its own com-pendium of "stories" from the first cohort of 10 specialists, with some analysis of their self-reported experi-ences. (Duke et al, 2005) The pro-gram's promising first year was fol-lowed by a somewhat more challeng-ing sophomore year, with a number of turnaround leaders leaving their new schools (as reported in

Betting on *People Change*: Still Not Changing the System

Intervention Comprehensiveness vs. Scale

Comprehensive turnaround (3 "Readiness" elements)

HPHP SCHOOLS
Individual high-performing, high-poverty schools

Intervention Comprehensiveness

■ VA Turnaround

PEOPLE CHANGE
New principal and/or staff

■ DC, SF Reconstitutions

PEOPLE CHANGE
■ Replacing principal
■ Replacing all teachers

PROGRAM CHANGE
"Providing-help" school improvement strategies

Narrower, traditional interventions

Single school   District   State

Intervention Scale

The second of our conceptual maps of the school intervention landscape places initiatives focused on changing people largely in the lower lefthand quadrant. These initiatives have tended to lack scale (limited, as they are, by the available capacity for new staff and leadership) and they also stop short of changing the conditions in which newly reconstituted staffs and/or new leaders work. Their track record of impact is limited, at best (although Virginia's Turnaround Specialist program shows solid improvement in some of its schools).

A.3

People Change
(continued)

Education Week and elsewhere; see the Supplemental Report for more).

The changing-leadership strategy, in fact, faces a number of obstacles. First, since turnaround leadership appears to be a specialty requiring specific competencies and skills, it is likely that the supply of individuals capable of taking on this role successfully is limited. Programs like the VSTSP are seeking to address the supply issue in one way – though the scale-ability of that model is limited at best. District-

The Chicago experience at reconstitution prompted the district to halt implementation of this strategy in other schools.

based leadership academies in places like New York City, San Diego, and Boston, while less focused on "turnaround," are also aiming to increase the supply of capable school leaders. External efforts, notably New Leaders for New Schools, are scouring the country for high-potential leaders and offering them training and support. But if the nation shortly will have 5-10,000 chronically under-performing schools, the demand for capable turnaround leaders swamps the supply these efforts can currently offer. For the changing leadership strategy to work, then, policymakers, funders, and

entrepreneurs will need to do much more to increase the pipeline of individuals ready and able to fill these posts.

A second and related challenge is that for many reasons, the conditions for leadership in chronically under-performing schools are often far from ideal. As noted above, principals in these schools typically lack authority over the critical resources of people, money, and time, hemmed in as they are by district and state policies and by collective bargaining agreements.

While a hallmark of successful turnaround leaders is their ability and willingness to accomplish results despite such constraints, these barriers make the job less attractive – and the potential for impact more uncertain. Isolated examples like the bonuses paid by VSTSP notwithstanding, there are also few countervailing incentives for talented turnaround leaders to take up these jobs. Though there may be intrinsic rewards to taking on the toughest jobs in public education, there is no prospect for higher pay, special recognition, opportunities for advancement, or

other inducements that typically attract high-performing individuals into jobs. (Hay Group, 2004) In that context, recruiting the required pipeline of leaders looks even more challenging. The conditions and lack of authority over resources and strategies also make sustaining capable leadership over time exceedingly difficult.

All of this is not to say that changing leadership should not be an integral part of districts' and states' turnaround strategies. There are no silver-bullet strategies in effective turnaround, but effective leadership may well be the most important single element. Given the importance of school leadership in general, and turnaround leaders more specifically, policymakers must attend to this dimension of change in their turnaround approaches. But to do so successfully, the strategy must also include attention to priming the pipeline of leaders and changing the conditions of leadership – the authority and incentive structure – in order to make the turnaround job as attractive and viable as possible for capable people.

Reconstitution

Reconstitution is a more thorough-going version of changing people,

involving wholesale replacement of all or most of a school's staff, not just the principal. The theory of reconstitution is that chronically under-performing schools need a fresh start with a more or less completely new team of people who can build from scratch a school program that works.

Experiments with whole-school reconstitution have been limited to date, with generally abysmal results. Prominent examples include:

- **San Francisco.** The most cited case is San Francisco's 1983 reconstitution of six schools as part of a court-ordered desegregation effort. The district, in addition to changing the staff, also set about recruiting the best teachers available, adding technology and other resources, and focusing on improving the lot of underserved students. Researchers found that African American and Latino students in these initially reconstituted schools were performing better than those from similar backgrounds in other parts of the city. (McRobbie, 1998) However, in the eight schools reconstituted after 1994 in San Francisco, there has been little if any improvement in standardized test scores. (Ziebarth 2004)

San Francisco moved away from the strategy and has pursued more of a program-change approach featuring the use of coaches to improve under-performing schools.

- **Chicago.** Chicago attempted reconstitutions of high schools in 1997. Hess (2003) explains that although all teachers in reconstituted schools were technically fired, they were allowed to reapply and be hired back. While the opportunity to fire and replace teachers sounds plausible in theory, in practice Chicago's experience suggests the process was too rushed to allow administrators or teachers to make thoughtful or perhaps even meaningful hiring decisions. The final result was that varying but fairly high levels of staff remained in the same buildings despite being reconstituted. There are a variety of reasons for this variation, including the flawed hiring process, a lack of desire on teachers' part to work in a school that might close, and the need for any school district to continuously serve all of its students – i.e., the pressure under this kind of strategy to recruit and deploy a new staff immediately.

After three years of study, the researchers in Chicago (Hess, 2003) reported that there had been little change in the structure of the high schools, and little change in the quality of instruction despite the efforts of external partners. As the researchers found little had actually changed except for the changes in personnel, they were not at all surprised to find lower-than-average gains in reading achievement (roughly half the increase that the city of Chicago gained during this time period). The Chicago experience at reconstitution prompted the district to halt implementation of this strategy in other schools.

- **New York.** According to information assembled by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the New York Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) program of corrective action led to more than 40 schools being reconstituted in the early years of the program. The results of this aggressive program, of which reconstitution is but a part, are mixed. According to Mintrop and Trujillo (2005), less than half of the SURR schools have exited the program. And Brady (2003) points out that the criteria for exiting the SURR

program are considerably less stringent than what the state requires for NCLB. New York's experience, then, appears to be another disappointing one for reconstitution.

It appears from this research that reconstitutions suffer from the same twin problems that undermine other efforts to turn around low performing schools: insufficient capacity and obstructive conditions. The capacity challenge appears at two levels. First, districts attempting reconstitution have struggled to find more capable teachers to replace the ones let go during reconstitution. If the failing faculty is replaced by one with equal or lesser capability, there is no reason to think reconstitution alone will improve school performance dramatically. Second, reconstituted schools have typically lacked the leadership capacity and resources to effect a successful turnaround. The usual reconstitution timetable is to dismiss staff as one school year ends and re-hire over the summer, a timetable that leaves little opportunity for essentially a new school start-up effort to be undertaken.

Reconstitutions do involve some change to the condition set. In particular, the act of reconstitution itself requires someone to have the authority to dismiss members of the school

staff – a critical aspect of condition change. But this doesn't mean that the school, post-reconstitution, lives within a new condition set. The schools' new leaders may or may not have ongoing authority to build and change their teams, to allocate resources strategically, to set schedules and otherwise use time in ways that benefit their students.

The broader research on organizational turnaround suggests that wholesale replacement of staff, while sometimes used effectively, is not a necessary ingredient of turnaround success. Indeed, one recent review of the turnaround literature found that "successful turnarounds often combine new employees with old to introduce new energy and enthusiasm without losing skill and experience," citing six research studies in support of that conclusion. (Kowal and Hassel, 2005) In that light, the disappointing experience with school reconstitution is not at all surprising. While leadership change is often central to turnaround success, and the ability to shape school staff around a turnaround strategy is a critical authority for turnaround leaders to hold, broad-scale all-at-once staff replacement appears less viable as a strategy – or even as one element in a larger initiative.

A.3

A.4 System Redesign: Program, People – *and Conditions Change*

The operating context for intervention is as important as the intervention itself

There is enough research on the more typical forms of intervention, summarized in the two previous sections (and in the Supplemental Report), to conclude that they are generally insufficient to produce exemplary results on a broad scale – at least in the ways they have been implemented to date. Providing advice and continuous review, implementing new curricular/instructional/assessment programs, supporting staff development, even changing leadership and school staff: none of this work has produced a clearly delineated pathway that educators and policymakers might adopt to turn around the lowest-performing schools successfully.

What's missing?

Beyond the nature of the programming and effectiveness of the people, there is the context in which a school's leadership and staff are pursuing their mission – the set of conditions that shapes how decisions are made and the extent to which, in any operation, people are enabled to do their best work. Providing extensive help to schools whose leaders lack the authority to make change (or strong inducements to do so) appears limited in effect. Attracting and placing talented new leaders is more challenging when the conditions of leadership in a turnaround school are not designed to make real leadership possible. The same is true of teachers: why would talented, experienced people be drawn to classrooms in these schools under the same conditions that have conspired to produce so much failure, so consistently?

Ways to Create New Conditions

This is the line of thinking that has fueled the nation's charter school movement over the past ten years: in order to free up educators and school leaders to do their best work, the dysfunctions of the current public education system – so clearly evidenced by the learning outcomes produced in the bottom five percent of public schools – must be skirted entirely and a new system (and new set of conditions) must be put in its place. As discussed in the box on page 104, results from the nation's charter experiment are mixed, depending to a strong degree on the strength of the authorizing/accountability framework in which individual charter schools have developed. But this completely-outside-the-system model has not been the only response to the increasing conviction that the *conditions context* of reform is as important as the nature of the reform itself and the people implementing it. Decision-makers in a number of large school districts, and a growing set of policymakers at the state level, have begun to experiment with a hybrid approach that imports the *outside-the-system* thinking that characterizes charter schools – and attempts to implement it *within* the system.

As described in Part 3, the conditions change that has been the focus of these newer efforts can be thought of in two broad categories. One is ensuring that someone within the system, most likely school-level leaders or leadership teams, holds clear authority over the key resources that affect school performance and the implementation of

Philadelphia, Miami-Dade, New York, Oakland, and Boston. The initiatives are often gathered under the mantel of autonomy, with the Edmonton, Canada school district's experience cited as a primary model. (Beginning in the late 1990s, Edmonton pioneered an approach to district governance that placed substantial decision-making authority in the hands of school principals and that has produced promising results.) Increased authority at the school leadership level is sometimes used as a reward for relative high achievement, on the theory that

Decision-makers… have begun to experiment with a hybrid approach that imports the outside-the-system thinking that characterizes charter schools – and attempts to implement it within the system.
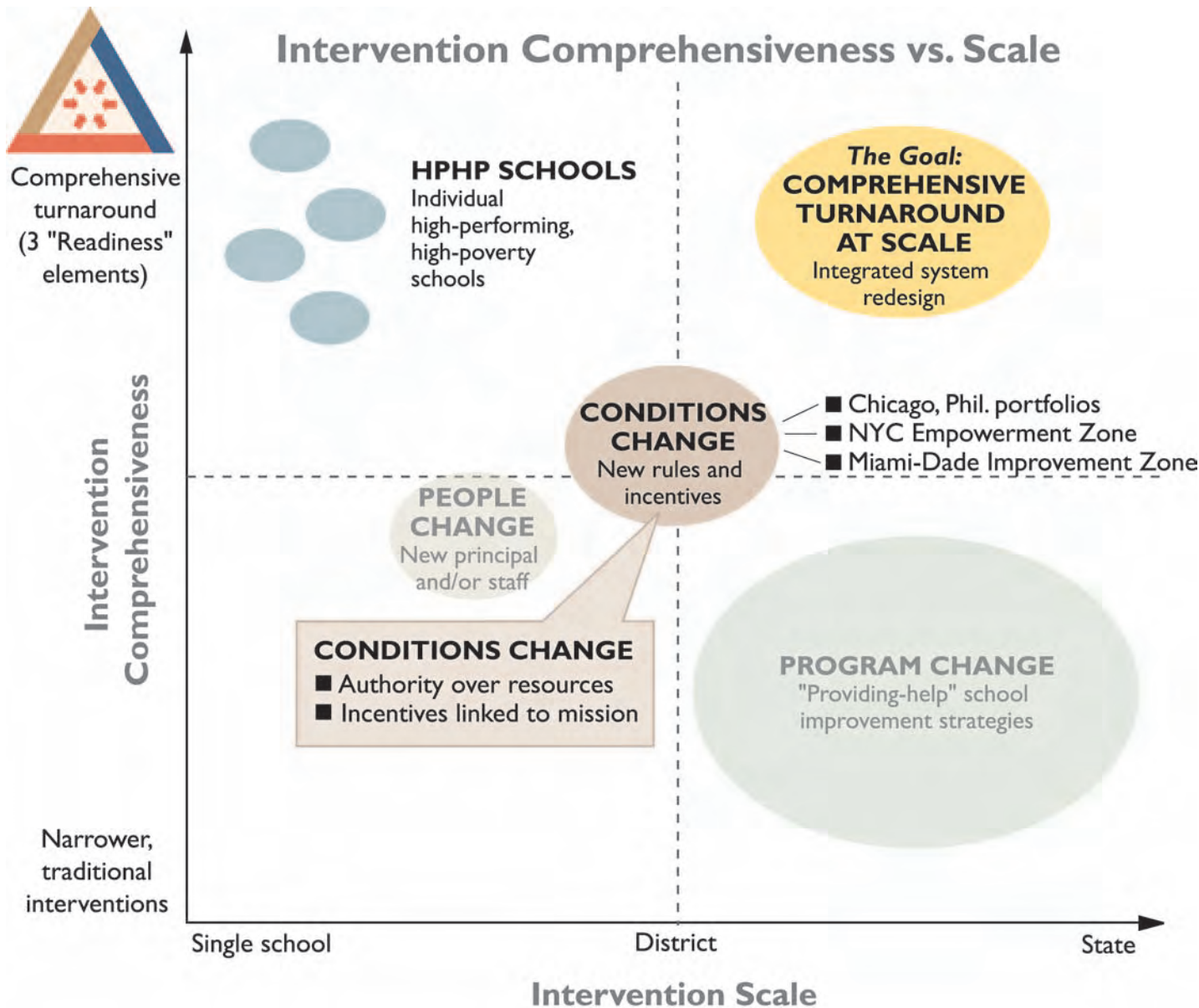
any turnaround plan: people, money, and time. The other is creating strong incentives for people to take on the challenge of turning around chronically under-performing schools, and to do so successfully. The research on the central importance of both authority and incentives is cited in Part 3 as well.

Most of the experimenting with condition change has been undertaken at the district level, by leaders in large urban districts including Chicago,

higher-performing schools could and should be given latitude to pursue their own strategies for improvement. But experiments are also underway to provide that authority (usually along with tighter accountability) to schools that volunteer for it – and, in some cases, to chronically under-performing schools as a central part of a turnaround strategy. These district-based reform efforts are discussed in subsequent pages of this section and in the Supplemental Report.

Getting to *System Redesign* by Incorporating Changes in Operating Conditions

Intervention Comprehensiveness vs. Scale

Comprehensive turnaround (3 "Readiness" elements)

HPHP SCHOOLS
Individual high-performing, high-poverty schools

The Goal:
COMPREHENSIVE TURNAROUND AT SCALE
Integrated system redesign

CONDITIONS CHANGE
New rules and incentives

- Chicago, Phil. portfolios
- NYC Empowerment Zone
- Miami-Dade Improvement Zone

PEOPLE CHANGE
New principal and/or staff

CONDITIONS CHANGE
- Authority over resources
- Incentives linked to mission

PROGRAM CHANGE
"Providing-help" school improvement strategies

Narrower, traditional interventions

Intervention Comprehensiveness

Single school   District   State

Intervention Scale

In this third version of our intervention-vs.-scale "map" of the current landscape of turnaround reform efforts, we place a number of initiatives that attempt to incorporate basic changes in operating conditions, work rules, and incentives as part of their approach to school intervention. By and large, we found, initiatives that include conditions change tend to allow for significant program and people change as well – but that is not always the case.

The initiatives shown here are district-based strategies because these selected, large urban districts have been more entrepreneurial than state policymakers in attempting this multi-dimensional kind of reform. Their experiments are too new to show definitive results, so it is too early to declare that they have found demonstrably effective turnaround pathways for chronically under-performing schools. But they do reflect a more comprehensive, systems-oriented approach that appears to more fully embrace, in our view, the characteristics of the HPHP (High-Performing, High-Poverty) schools profiled in Part 2. These initiatives are briefly described over the following pages and in greater detail in the Supplemental Report.

# System Redesign
(continued)

"Inside" and "Outside" Strategies to Transform Operating Conditions

Efforts to change the conditions context in which intervention takes place fall along a continuum from *inside* to virtually *outside* the normal school district governance and management structures, as portrayed in Figure AD.

At the "inside" end of the continuum are strategies that seek to change the conditions for turnaround schools, but largely within existing school district structures and arrangements. Schools remain district operated; staff members remain district employees and members of collective bargaining units; most district and collective bargaining policies still apply to the schools. But there are some special rules, some exceptions to policies that allow these schools to do things differently. Miami's School Improvement Zone, described more fully below and in the Supplemental Report, is a prime example of the inside approach to conditions change. New York's Chancellor's District (an initiative that operated in the 1990s),

The Continuum of *Outside*-the-System Approaches, Applied to Various Degrees *Inside* the System
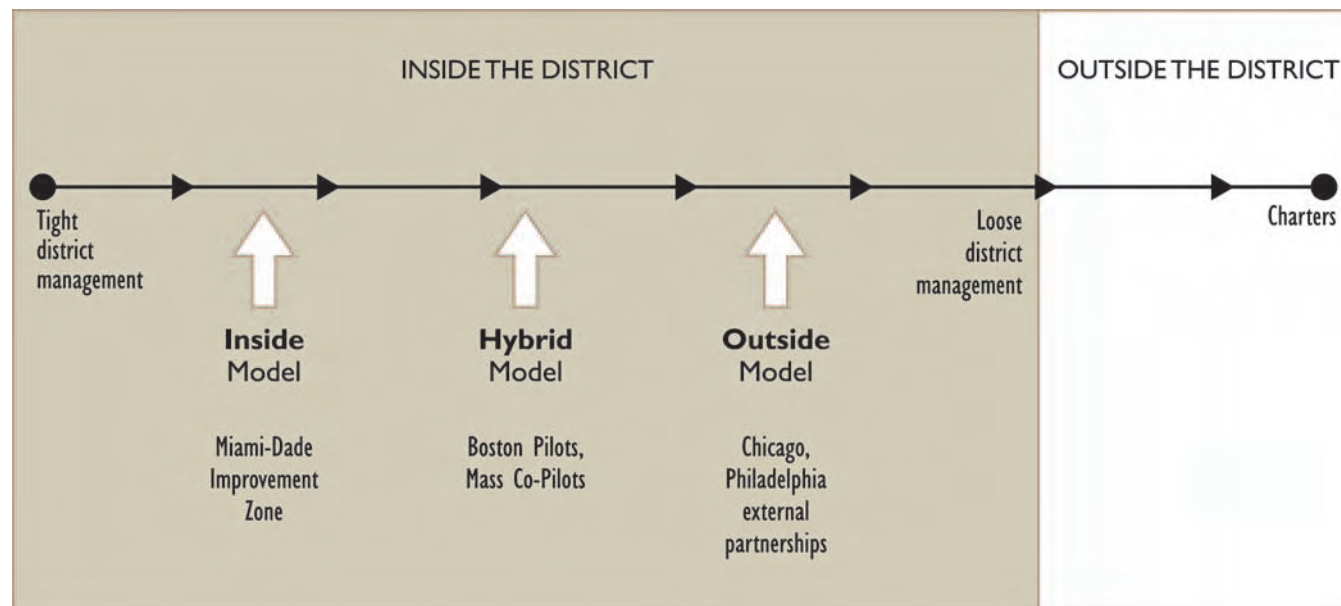
Philadelphia's district-operated low-performing schools, and Chicago's "Performance Schools" fit into this category as well.

At the "outside" end, districts and states effect conditions change by turning over control of schools to outside providers. Through a charter or a contract, these providers gain authority over the key resources of people, time, and money. And through that same contract or charter, they shoulder potentially powerful incentives to succeed or else face revocation or non-renewal of their agreement. While there are many isolated examples of this approach to improving chronically under-performing schools, a small number of districts have begun using this instrument across multiple schools. Philadelphia and Chicago, for example, have entered into contracts and charters with a wide variety of nonprofit and for-profit entities to operate chronically low-performing

schools. In San Diego, four schools facing "Restructuring" under No Child Left Behind were closed and reopened as charter schools under former superintendent Alan Bersin.

In between these two extremes are hybrid efforts to use in-district but charter-like structures to create a condition set that similarly combines authority and incentives (including increased accountability). A leading example of this general approach is Boston's network of "pilot schools" – though Boston has used the pilot mechanism primarily to start new schools rather than to turn around low-performing schools. In pilot schools, teachers remain union members, but the schools receive greater latitude in five areas – curriculum, staffing, budgeting, scheduling, and governance (see box at the end of this section) – to pursue learning models developed individually by staff and leadership at each pilot school. Other districts have created similar arrangements for single schools, such as Worcester, Massachusetts' University Park Campus School, profiled extensively in the Supplemental Report and at Mass Insight's effective-practice research website, www.buildingblocks.org.

The following descriptions profile these approaches – inside, outside, and hybrid – and their emerging results in more detail.

An *Inside* Turnaround Zone Model: Miami-Dade's Improvement Zone

Upon becoming Miami-Dade's superintendent of schools in 2004, Rudolph (Rudy) Crew created the Miami School Improvement Zone, a cluster of 39 schools with chronically low test scores. (Crew had pioneered this approach with the Chancellor's District in New York City, previously.) Schools in the Zone receive the whole range of interventions described in this report. The district provides a great deal of assistance to Zone schools, in the form of intensive teacher training around district-selected curricula. The district also enabled fairly extensive people change, replacing 15 principals at the 39 schools and turning over a significant number of teachers. And the district also changed the schools' operating conditions, negotiating with the teacher's union for the authority to pay Zone teachers 20 percent more to compensate them for working an extra hour per school day and a ten-day-longer school year. (Farrell, 2005)

In contrast to the other approaches described below, conditions-change in the Zone has not revolved around granting more authority to school-level managers. On the contrary, schools in the Zone are subject to more intensive centralized control over such matters as curriculum, scheduling, and teacher training. The conditions-change has had more to do with increased authority in these areas at the district level, via negotiations with the teachers' union. The key idea here is thus not simply the delegation of power to schools, so much as it is *ensuring conditions that support the district's strategies for intervention*. That set of strategies, developed in part by former Miami-Dade deputy superintendent Irving Hamer (who was a principal consultant on this report), involves a suite of nine interlocking elements ranging from new curricula and assessments to close collaboration with social service agencies.

A critical hallmark of Miami-Dade's approach has been the re-establishment of an identity for Zone schools that has helped to make them places where people *want* to work. The district held a successful national recruiting fair for teachers that set that tone even before the Zone opened for its first year – and convinced some teachers who'd thought they might transfer out of the schools to stay. Since then, the schools in the Improvement Zone (which completed its third year in 2006-7), have shown appreciably stronger achievement gains than other Miami-Dade schools in the same time period, though many remain below district averages. See the Supplemental Report for a more detailed analysis.

Outside Forms of Turnaround Zones: Chartering and Contracting

In contrast to Miami's *inside* strategy, the approach of "outsourcing" management – contracting or chartering with outside organizations – places authority and accountability directly with the school, or with the school operator in the case of contracts with multi-school education management organizations. While 3,600 charter schools operate nationwide, only a small number of schools have been closed and reopened as charter schools in response to chronic low performance. The states of Louisiana and Colorado have taken this step, as has the San Diego school district. (Ziebarth and Wohlstetter, 2005) The Chicago and Philadelphia "portfolio" approaches include complements of schools run by charter management organizations, through these arrangements look more like contracts than independent charters, strictly speaking; the Oakland school district, meanwhile, went so far as to collaborate with outside partners to create a new charter management organization (called Education for Change) to take over two struggling elementary schools.

More common has been the contracting approach, where districts have entered into agreements with an outside entity to manage low-performing schools. These entities come in both for-profit (education management organizations, or EMOs) and non-profit (charter management organizations, or CMOs) varieties, and they also differ substantially in the types of instructional programs they offer and how they are managed. (Colby, Smith, & Shelton, 2005) Many districts have contracted out the management of individual schools, but some have gone farther in an attempt to use contracting as a more scaled-up strategy. These include Baltimore, MD, and Chester, PA, which contracted with Edison Schools for the management of some struggling schools; Philadelphia, which contracts with a range of for-profit EMOs as well as universities and non-profits to manage some of its toughest schools; and Chicago, which is closing low-performing schools and reopening them under a variety of arrangements including contracts. Some states (e.g., Maryland) have experimented with the approach as well, though in the majority of cases (e.g., Hawaii and Massachusetts), the contracting has stopped short of outsourcing authority to run the under-performing schools.

The research on contracting, in general, closely parallels that on chartering – meaning, the results are mixed. A number of charter schools and some contract schools have produced extraordinary results with previously unsuccessful students, but the performance of many other charter and contract schools is similar to or lower than that of comparable schools. Key distinguishers appear to match the conditions context and related analysis outlined above, with flexibility, incentives, and resources – especially human resources – emerging as important factors. At the system level, a rigorous provider selection process, strong accountability for results, and extensive school autonomy appear to support effective chartering. (National Association of Charter School Authorizers, 2005) According to a U.S. Department of Education study of successful charter schools, the authority to do things differently is a critical success factor for the schools examined. (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) At the school level, effective school design and highly capable leadership both appear to distinguish successful charter schools, though the specific characteristics of a capable start-up leader are different from those of a capable leader of an on-going school. (Arkin & Kowal, 2005)

With results very mixed, contracting has not proved to be a panacea for districts seeking dramatic improvement. Some experiments, such as Chester, PA's attempt to contract out the management of almost all the system's schools, have failed miserably. (Rhim, 2004) In other cities, such as Philadelphia and Baltimore, contracting has achieved mixed but somewhat more encouraging success. (Rhim 2005a, 2005b; Gill et al, 2007); see the profile of Philadelphia in the Supplemental Report for more detail.) But system-level conditions similar to those in chartering appear to facilitate success, including rigorous upfront selection, freedom to act for chosen contractors, and clear contracts that instill results-based accountability. (Rhim 2005a, 2005b) In Chester, for example, the contractor (Edison Schools) did not receive substantial authority over the critical resources, especially staff.

The issues surrounding chartering and contracting as strategies for intervention mirror the challenges facing struggling schools in general. As a study completed by Mass Insight for the NewSchools Venture Fund (2007) showed, the provider "marketplace" currently lacks both the capacity and, to a strong degree, sufficient interest in contracting with school districts to run turnaround schools. Most of the

executives at the 50 CMOs and EMOs interviewed for that study expressed skepticism that the contracts would provide them with the autonomy and the resources they believe would be required to turn around a struggling school. The experience of those who had done some contract work for school districts, in fact, bears out that skepticism. (Mass Insight, 2007) In one noteworthy example, the Green Dot charter management organization elected to create a set of small charters within the enrollment draw area of Jefferson High School in Los Angeles, because it could not arrive at an agreement with the LAUSD for turnaround of Jefferson High that gave Green Dot the authority it felt it needed. In other large districts, even when the commitment to autonomy from district red tape was strong at the superintendent level, contract operators reported that this commitment did not necessarily extend into the middle layers of the district bureaucracy, which precipitated issues around facility use and non-educational services such as transportation and food.

In short, chartering and contracting have not proved, *by themselves*, to be the answer to the problem of chronically under-performing schools. While these "outsourced-management" arrangements show promise in sometimes bringing together important elements for intervention – in the form of program, people, and conditions change – the track record for experiments being pursued under this approach is too mixed (and is still too young) to have yielded conclusive results. These strategies present, in addition, other questions that are difficult to address: for example, what happens when a contract for management of an under-performing school expires? If the work has been successful, is the contract extended or is the now adequately-performing school returned to the school district – and under what kinds of conditions?

Outcomes emerging from some larger district/partner collaborations, such as the First Things First program being implemented by the Kansas City, KS school district with the non-profit group IRRE (Institute for Research and Reform in Education), indicate that sustained, comprehensive partnerships encompassing all three forms of change, in some manner, can produce improvement. The question is whether – and how – school districts and states can combine effective partnering with outside-of-the-system conditions and a comprehensive, integrated reform approach to turn around the most dysfunctional, most consistently under-performing schools. That question is taken up in Part 5 of this report.

How Ready Are Districts to Contract Successfully with Turnaround Partners?

Mass Insight's 2007 study for NewSchools Venture Fund identified four variables that indicate school districts' readiness to contract effectively with outside partners to pursue turnaround in under-performing schools:

1. **Interest in using outside providers for restructuring:** district leadership commitment to shake up the status quo, along with legal/regulatory "permission"

2. **Willingness to grant providers sufficient autonomy:** through chartering or contracting – with autonomies clearly spelled out in the contract language

3. **Stability and clout of educational and political leadership:** strong mayor as important as strong superintendent, in some cases buttressed by state intervention providing additional powers

4. **Financial/contractual viability of turnaround initiative:** adequate funding (see page 79) and appropriate contracting mechanisms and capacity.

Source: Considering School Turnarounds: Market Research and Analysis in Six Urban Districts, Mass Insight Education & Research Institute, 2007
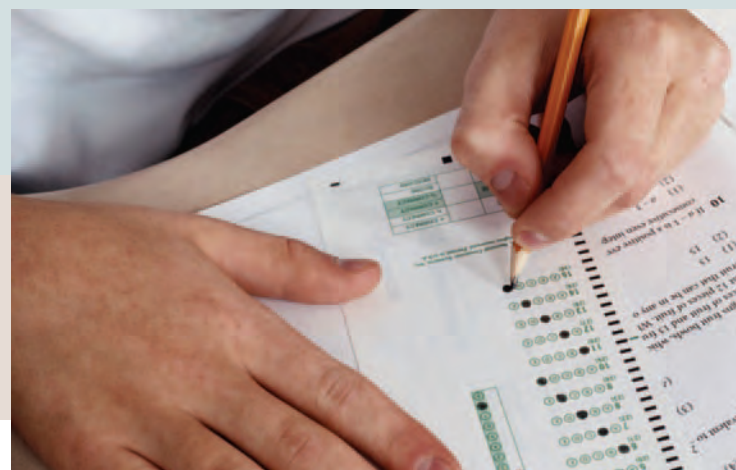
A *Hybrid* Inside/Outside Model: Boston's Pilot Schools

As shown in Figure AD, there is a continuum of possibilities between Miami-Dade's internal, district-centric effort to transform operating conditions in struggling schools and the outsourcing strategies of chartering and contracting. Some districts have pursued a strategy that combines inside and outside approaches to conditions change, the best example of which may be Boston's "pilot schools" strategy. Pilot schools first opened in 1995 through an unusual agreement between the district, the teachers' union, and other parties. Under this agreement, pilot schools enjoy five "autonomies": budget, staffing, scheduling, curriculum/instruction/assessment, and governance/policies – in short, precisely the sort of authority associated with conditions change we have studied in this report. Yet unlike charter and contract schools, pilot schools are still squarely within-district schools, and staff remain members of the city's collective bargaining unit.

A recent evaluation of Boston's pilot schools found that they use their autonomy to make time for faculty collaboration, reduce class sizes and teacher loads, increase the length of instructional periods, create a "nurturing" school culture, and require competency or mastery beyond statewide requirements for graduation. (Center for Collaborative Education, 2006) The evaluation also cites strong student performance results for the pilot schools, relative to regular district schools. (For example, 84% of pilot school students passed the state 10th grade English Language Arts exam in 2005, compared to 58% of Boston Public School students overall. The study also points to better attendance and fewer discipline issues as signals of these schools' success.) Skeptics of their success note that they are "opt-in" academies (as are charter schools) that serve more motivated students (and fewer trouble-makers) than regular public schools.

The pilot school approach was not originally developed as a way to conduct turnaround of under-performing schools; like charter schools, and like other initiatives such as Edmonton's school-level autonomy approach, New York City's Empowerment Zone, and Oakland's Results-Based Budgeting program, it reflects the idea that decentralizing some forms of decision-making authority will ensure that "those closest to the students... get to make the key decisions" (to quote from New York's description of its *Children First* initiative, announced in January 2007). If all of this sounds a bit like the site-based management wave of reform that had its heyday in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that's because it *is* a descendent in many ways of that movement, but with more careful attention being paid, generally, to the mix of "tight" (centralized) and "loose" (decentralized) authorities across the various domains in which schools operate: instruction, assessment, human resource management, facilities management, transportation, policy compliance, etc. We study the loose-tight blend of authority in our discussion of a potential state and district framework for school turnaround in Part 4, and in the profiles of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Miami-Dade in the Supplemental Report.

Boston's Pilot School model has recently become the centerpiece of a new experiment by the Massachusetts State Board of Education – one that merits close attention. Seeking ways to motivate districts to pursue more dramatic, transformational turnaround of failing schools, Board chair Christopher Anderson invited three districts (Boston, Springfield, and Fitchburg) to use a new Commonwealth Pilot (or "Co-Pilot") turnaround option to avoid having the "chronically under-performing" label pinned on four schools. The schools were essentially given two alternatives: take ownership of a substantial conversion process into a Co-Pilot School, or accept much more intensive state intervention. All four schools elected, with union support and 80% faculty votes, to enter into Co-Pilot status and submitted plans that met the state's ten "enabling conditions" (see page 74) and other criteria. They were to reopen in the fall of 2007 as Co-Pilots with many of the autonomies described here, supported by their district and a Co-Pilot network managed by the Center for Collaborative Education. It's an interesting experiment in achieving the right balance of local control/buy-in, state-specified turnaround criteria, and network support. The keys to success will lie in adjusting the Pilot model to suit a turnaround context – which would mean firmer support and direction from the network – and ensuring that the network provider has the necessary resources to provide the required external capacity.

The Five Autonomies of Boston's Pilot Schools

Staffing: Teachers who work in Pilot Schools are exempt from teachers' union contract work rules, while still receiving union salary, benefits, and accrual of seniority within the district. Teachers voluntarily choose to work at Pilot Schools; when hired, they sign what is called an "election-to-work agreement," which stipulates the work conditions for each school for the coming school year. The agreement is revisited and revised annually with staff input.

Budgetary: Rather than receiving most of their budget through staffing allocation formulas set by the district, Pilot Schools receive a lump sum per pupil amount equal to other BPS (Boston Public) schools that each Pilot School is able to allocate as they see fit. As well, Pilot Schools can decide whether or not to purchase discretionary central office services from the district. If a service is not purchased, the per pupil amount for that service is added to the school's lump sum per pupil budget. The total amount of central discretionary services is approximately $500 per pupil.

Curriculum and Assessment: Pilot Schools… are not required to follow district-mandated curriculum or assessments. Pilot Schools often create or modify curriculum to fulfill each individual school's mission. For example, one Pilot School is focused on expeditionary learning, and staff planned a whole curriculum around the idea of survival. Staff engagement [reportedly has] increased with their increased decision-making capabilities.

Governance: Several different decision-making bodies exist in Pilot Schools, drawing on the voices of staff, students, and families. Staff decision-making groups may include leadership teams, curriculum teams, and committees. Governing boards in Pilot Schools have more authority than traditional school site councils. Pilot School governing boards consist of the principal, staff (at least four), family representatives, community members (including from higher education, business, community organizations), and for middle and high schools, students. Their respective peers elect staff, family, and student representatives, while the overall governing board selects community members.

Scheduling: Schools vary the length and schedule of instructional periods, which allows staff more flexibility in their teaching. Many Pilot Schools choose to increase the length of instructional blocks to improve teaching and learning. Extra time allows staff and students to pursue a subject more deeply. Teachers also have the possibility of teaching an interdisciplinary curriculum and team-teaching. Pilot Schools are [also] able to modify the school schedule and calendar. High schools may determine start and end times for their schools (elementary and middle schools are still constrained by the district bus schedule); as a result, most Pilot high schools start later in the day than regular BPS schools.

Excerpted from The Essential Guide to Pilot Schools, Center for Collaborative Education; available at www.cce.org

A Demanding Strategy

Two broad points about conditions change as a key element in turning around low-performing schools appear warranted from our examination of what's been tried. First: the nature of this principle and the newness of its application within a turnaround context point to the need for much more research into which authorities can effectively be decentralized and which should more logically remain the province of a centralized network operator – in most cases, a school district – and how this loose-vs.-tight equation should be adjusted for higher, lower, or the most chronically poor-performing schools. "Loose-vs.-tight," in our view, may well become the critical school reform research question of this decade. (For a compelling analysis already published, see Colby, Smith, and Shelton, 2005. Mass Insight is planning an in-depth research-and-development process to produce a set of recommendations on this issue for school networks.)

Second: districts and states need substantial capacity of their own to engage in successful conditions change, even if it is part of a strategy that devolves authority to schools or to outside providers. It is tempting to think of changing conditions as a low-investment strategy, one that involves changing rules and policies but otherwise not requiring the substantial funding and related support associated with such approaches as providing guidance via school assistance teams. Research and experience with conditions change, however, tell another story. Chartering and contracting, for example, require significant investment in systems to recruit and develop providers, select qualified operators, design RFPs and contracts that reflect research-based reform criteria, monitor contract performance, and take action when contract performance falls short. Failure to develop such systems underlies many of the problems that have emerged with chartering and contracting approaches nationally. (Kowal and Arkin, 2005; Arkin and Kowal, 2005) The importance of such systems would be doubled when a district or state wants to undertake conditions change for the purpose of school turnaround – and doubled again when turnaround is undertaken at scale, across a number of schools and districts simultaneously.

A.4

Appendix B: References

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

Mass Insight's education reform strategies are defined by two convictions: that change at scale depends on the practical integration of research, policy, and practice; and that only dramatic and comprehensive change in high-poverty schools will produce significant achievement gains. The strategies that Boston-based Mass Insight implemented to help make Massachusetts a reform model now inform the organization's national work on two high-impact goals:
- using Advanced Placement® as a lever to attain excellence in math and science achievement and to transform school culture, and
- the successful turnaround of consistently under-performing public schools.

We are:

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

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

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

See www.massinsight.org for more details.

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

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute

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