



Strategies for Improving Achievement in High-Needs Schools

Date	April 1, 2008
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Request	Are there states that have had success in improving achievement at high-needs schools? What strategies have been successful?
Summary	In response to this request, the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) queried numerous organizations by e-mail and telephone. The SECC also used several Web search engines to obtain information on strategies for improving achievement in high-needs schools. The results are provided below along with references and resources that may provide additional information on this topic.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states receiving federal Title I funding to take significant action for schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). According to the United States Department of Education (USDE), AYP is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students meeting state academic standards in at least reading/language arts and math. It sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, its school districts, and schools must achieve each year on annual tests and related academic indicators. Refer to Table 1, NCLB Sanctions for Failure to Make AYP, on the next page for detailed information.

Moreover, the NCLB act requires states to take action to close achievement gaps between student groups based on income, race, gender, native language, and disability, which includes those in high-needs schools. High-needs schools are characterized by a combination of student, teacher, and community factors, such as the following (Berry, Ferriter, Banks, & Drew, 2006):

- Disproportionate numbers of students performing below grade level and those who frequently move from school to school
- Large percentages of students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) or who come from single-parent or low-income families
- Impoverished communities that cannot afford to provide current school facilities and equipment, such as new technologies for students and teachers to have equal access to teaching and learning resources
- Staffing patterns associated with disproportionate numbers of new, inexperienced, or lateral entry teacher, high teacher turnover rates, and low percentages of well prepared, experienced teachers

Table 1. NCLB Sanctions for Failure to Make Adequate Yearly Progress

Consecutive Year of Failure to Make AYP	Designation	Sanction
1	Warning Year	None
2	School Improvement Year 1	District must offer choice for students in underperforming schools to attend other district schools not identified for improvement
3	School Improvement Year 2	District must continue to offer choice as well as provide supplemental educational services such as tutoring and after-school services
4	School Improvement Year 3	District must take corrective actions for school improvement, above and beyond school choice and supplemental services
5	School Improvement Year 4	District must create a plan for restructuring the school
6	School Improvement Year 5	District must implement the restructuring plan

Note. Information obtained from the Education Commission of the States, 2005. Adapted with permission of ECS.

STATE HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT

Due to the regulatory requirements for AYP and the associated sanctions, many states and school districts are examining ways in which to change their practices and improve teaching and learning. Below is information obtained from the National High School Center (NHSC) that highlights state high school initiatives with a general focus on school improvement.

Alabama. The purpose of the Alabama High School Initiative is to raise expectations and achievement so that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college and work. Alabama has joined with other states, the National Governors Association (NGA), and Achieve, Inc., in the American Diploma Project to assist high schools in meeting the challenges of students dropping out of high school or completing high school with serious deficiencies in mathematics, reading, and writing skills. In addition, Alabama is one of eight states funded by NGA as part of the Honors State Grant Program to explore the expansion of Advanced Placement Courses as a means to raise standards for all students. Link to high school initiative page: http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section_detail.asp?section=54

Iowa. The state has developed a tool kit designed to support high school improvement initiatives that focus on improved graduation rates, increased rigor in coursework, better relationships between school staff and students and community, as well as better planning tools to help students prepare for success beyond high school. The target audiences for these materials are students and their parents, community members, and businesses. Link to tool kit: <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/672/1001/>

Nevada. With Nevada's Blueprint for High School Improvement, the state's aim is to provide all Nevada students with a rigorous and relevant education that prepares them for the wide-range of postsecondary options that are available, including but not limited to, college and work readiness. To this end, Nevada has created a plan that addresses improving the rigor and relevance of current course offerings, expands the availability of nontraditional

high school structures and programs, and enhances Nevada's collection system of relevant student performance data that provides critical information to improvement planning, implementation, and program evaluation. The plan also hopes to strengthen statewide communication by creating a forum for consistent and ongoing dialogue of key stakeholders. Link to blueprint: <http://www.doe.nv.gov/schoolimprovement/blueprint.html>

Oregon. The Oregon Department of Education's School Improvement and Research Demonstration Project focuses on creating comprehensive, meaningful, and relevant high school environments that challenge, support, and prepare every student for success in their next steps in life. This will be accomplished through grants and collaborative work between the state's department of education and four to six high schools. The Small School Initiative is designed to increase student achievement and graduation rates in Oregon's high schools. Each participating school will receive intensive coaching and technical assistance that will reflect the latest research and best practices in teaching and learning as well as leadership and community involvement. Link to initiative: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=127>

South Carolina. South Carolina is allocating both state and federal funding to districts to improve ACT and SAT scores. These funds may be used to 1) upgrade instructional materials for ACT and SAT preparation, 2) support school-based professional development for district staff, 3) cover the costs of ACT and SAT preparation programs for students, and/or 4) provide incentives to students for improving their scores. South Carolina boasts of this program's success based on a recent *Newsweek* article listing the top 1,200 high schools in the nation. The state had 15 schools on the list, two of which are ranked in the top 100. Link to initiative: <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/hsr/>

Below is information from the NHSC for states that have established high school initiatives that are designed to support low-performing high schools.

California. The California Department of Education, in conjunction with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, established a program that promotes district-community partnerships as a means of facilitating high school reform and redesign development and implementation in 11 participating districts. Districts develop a reform and redesign plan that applies to all high schools within the district and consider support needed from the central administration to facilitate change at the site level. Link to Web site: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hspsgen.asp>

Florida. Florida has passed legislation "to provide for secondary school redesign so that students promoted from the 8th grade have the necessary academic skills for success in high school and students graduating from high school have the necessary skills for success in the workplace and postsecondary education." The legislation acknowledges that struggling students, especially those in failing schools, need the highest quality teachers and instruction.

Additionally, it promotes the following elements:

- Literacy development across the curriculum
- Small learning communities to better enable teachers to personalize instruction to address student needs
- Early and intensive intervention in reading and mathematics
- Parental involvement
- Developing integrated courses based on student interests, goals, and talents
- Academic and career planning that engages students

Specific strategies identified include credit recovery courses, intensive reading and mathematics intervention courses, grade forgiveness policies, summer academies, creative and flexible scheduling, and tools for parents to regularly monitor student progress and communicate with teachers. Link to redesign act: http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1003/SEC413.HTM&Title=-%3e2006-%3eCh1003-%3eSection%20413

Georgia. Georgia aims to increase the high school graduation rate, decrease the dropout rate, and increase the postsecondary enrollment rate through a three-pronged approach that includes 1) Graduation Coach Initiative, 2)

Teachers-as-Advisors Program, and 3) school counselors to implement research-based best practices. Link to redesign plan: http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_school_redesign.aspx

Kansas. Kansas recently announced its Secondary Education Research Project. The purpose of the project is to study the characteristics and practices of high schools within the state that are especially effective at improving the academic performance of previously low-performing students. The state will be conducting the study in cooperation with Education Trust and Kansas State University. The model for the study is Education Trust's *2005 High Impact High School Study*. At this point, the state is inviting districts to participate in the research study. The final results will serve as the foundation for the development of a resource for improving students' success. Link to research project: <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1953>

Louisiana. The Louisiana Commission on High School Redesign was created in 2004 to redesign high schools and enable all Louisiana youth to graduate from high school prepared to succeed. Specifically, the commission will make "recommendations for the development of statewide policies, guiding principles, and programs that address the current and future economic needs of the state and promote student success in high school and life beyond secondary education." A major component of their work is to oversee the state's involvement with the American Diploma Project and the implementation of a grant from the National Governors Association to support high school redesign efforts. Link to redesign commission: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/hsr/2045.html>

Michigan. Michigan acknowledges that AYP is one of the cornerstones of the federal NCLB act and provides schools that have not made AYP for 2 or more consecutive years additional support and new responsibilities. Support includes the MI-Map School Improvement Tool Kit that builds upon the Michigan School Improvement Framework. Link to priority schools Web page: http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334-103288--,00.html

Minnesota. Minnesota has a multi-pronged approach to address issues related to dropout prevention and high school redesign. Some specific strategies the state uses include 1) a Dropout Prevention, Retention, and Graduation Initiative funded through a School Dropout Prevention grant from the USDE; 2) Systemic High School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model; and 3) training opportunities for high schools. Link to initiative: http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/High_School_Initiatives/index.html

Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's Project 720, named for the number of days a student spends in high school from the beginning of 9th grade to the end of 12th grade, provides support to all high school students in efforts to promote their graduating from high school prepared to enter college and the high-skills workforce. The program focuses on establishing dual enrollment opportunities, improving career and technical education opportunities, and creating seamless transitions from high school to higher education. The program highlights some of its successes on its Web site. Link to site: <http://www.project720.org/content/view/19/69/>

Washington. In 2005, Washington's High School Improvement Initiative got its start through state and foundation funding. Ten comprehensive high schools in diverse communities across the state were selected to receive funds for school improvement focused on ensuring students graduate prepared for college, careers, and civic engagement. The mission of the School Improvement Assistance program is to help build capacity for schools and districts to improve student achievement through the use of a continuous school improvement model. Program components include a school improvement facilitator; comprehensive needs assessment/educational audit; school improvement process, tools, and support; funds for staff planning and collaboration; training workshops; and professional development. Link to initiative: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SchoolImprovement/HighSchoolReform.aspx>

SCHOOL TURNAROUND CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

In *The Turnaround Challenge* (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007), a comprehensive report on making dramatic improvements in low-performing schools, the authors analyzed extensive research on this topic and studied both low- and high-performing school districts throughout the United States. The authors defined turnaround as follows:

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.

The Turnaround Challenge main report covered the challenges of school turnaround, how high-needs schools inspire learning in adverse conditions, the requirements of achieving success in school turnaround, organization at the state level, and a framework for turnaround of low-performing schools. Also, a supplement to the main report profiled 10 state intervention strategies as well as four school districts that have taken significant action to improve student achievement levels and performance of their schools. Refer to Tables 2 and 3 for detailed information on the strategies that were profiled in the supplement.

In the *Turnaround Challenge*, the authors studied a small number of high-poverty, high-performing (HPHP) schools and identified several factors that have allowed these schools to improve achievement for their student populations. Several of the HPHP schools operated outside the traditional school district structures (charter or in-district charter-like structures) while others were led by strong, entrepreneurial principals. Also, the HPHP schools in the study addressed head-on the systemic effects of poverty on their students' learning. Key initiatives implemented by HPHP schools included the following:

- Authority of turnaround leaders to make choices about allocating resources—people, time, and money—in support of the plan
- Waivers of some collective bargaining agreements and work rules
- Resources to compensate staff according to professional norms, such as for extra responsibility, duty in high-need areas, or for performance
- Resources for additional time in the school day and/or year
- Extensive outside assistance from providers

The authors of the report also provided a framework for school turnaround that focuses on system redesign, changing conditions, building capacity, and the state's role in the turnaround process. A summary of the key elements of the framework is provided below.

System Redesign

1. Turnaround focuses on the most consistently low-performing schools, specifically those in the bottom 5%. Change is propelled by the imperative that the school must significantly improve its academic outcomes or it will be redefined or removed.
2. Successful school turnaround produces dramatic improvement in student achievement over a compressed timeframe, no more than 2 years. School districts and states should not try to address every failing school at once but to work on a manageable group of schools, districts, and clusters; establish success on a small scale and expand from there.

Changing Conditions

3. Effective turnaround depends on widely recognized program reform elements, such as curricular improvement

and alignment with standards, teacher capacity-building, effective leadership, targeted use of performance data, etc. However, it depends on gaining authority over critical resources and levers for improved achievement.

Building Capacity

4. Maximizing leadership and staff capacity is the most critical element in success and the state's most important role. This includes having increased authority to fashion school staff, through recruitment, hiring, firing, placement, development, and differentiated compensation.

5. Fragmented, uncoordinated assistance from outside providers must be replaced with an aligned, integrated system of support. This includes coordination of the roles of contributors, such as nonprofit organizations, professional associations, colleges and universities, as well as social service agencies.

Clustering for Support

6. Effective turnaround focuses on establishing change at the school and classroom level, organized in clusters of schools by need, design, or region.

7. Effective turnaround on a large scale requires a blending of "loose" (refers to latitude in management and design) and "tight" (refers to more centralized control) factors in design and implementation.

8. To enhance efficiency and capacity building, states should vary their involvement in the turnaround process based on the degree of local capacity.

Effective Statewide Coordination

9. Due to the lack of a natural constituency for low-performing schools, advocates of school turnaround should strive to build leadership support at the state and local levels.

10. States must make the changes necessary to free themselves to do the work involved in turnaround initiatives. They also should build leadership support for turnaround at the state and local levels, which includes governors, legislatures, and commissioners; state board of education and education leaders; foundations and nonprofits; business and media; civic leaders; local school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and union leaders; as well as parents.

Table 2. State Intervention Strategies for Under-Performing Schools

State	Strategies	Results
Alabama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created a new board to manage state restructuring efforts Created state support teams and adopted a collaborative, coaching-based approach to school restructuring Created the Alabama Accountability Roundtable to provide seamless coordination of support services for restructuring schools at the state level (Round tables meet 4 days per month to review information on school turnaround efforts provided by the regional school improvement coaches operating throughout the state) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved state capacity by distributing restructuring knowledge throughout agency State support teams (composed of regional school improvement coaches, peer mentors, and school improvement specialists) provide critical coaching and collaborative assistance throughout the planning and implementation stages. Improvement specialists act as coordinators of reform efforts, providing ongoing professional development to instructors and leaders. Provide peer mentors and highly qualified “master” teachers who serve as source of intensive instructional capacity necessary for reform interventions; also create intervention plan Coordination of state services in response to defined local needs, way to build capacity within the state department of education (SDE); foster a culture focused on school improvement and restructuring at the state level
Arizona	<p>Developed three-tiered approach to interventions. Each school is placed in one of three categories based on a combination of its performance in the state accountability system, AYP standards, and feedback from state review teams in the field:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention - highest achieving schools are provided technical assistance (TA) and focused support should they fail to meet AYP for the first time School Improvement Assistance - schools receive capacity-building services from the state department as they plan for improvement and are subject to state monitoring School Improvement Intervention - schools have their restructuring planning and implementation managed by the Arizona SDE State boards also have the power to restructure schools and have gained power over content in school improvement plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created solution teams to address the following issues: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing school deficiencies, evaluate whether structures and conditions are in place to support implementation of a successful restructuring plan Consider if state can provide any further assistance Make recommendations regarding school restructuring plan SDE assigns a school improvement coach to consult with solutions team State has taken a proactive stance towards state intervention in failing schools

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State	Strategies	Results
California	Prior to NCLB, California instituted a plan to provide state intervention to chronically under-performing schools. The state abandoned the system with the institution of NCLB because AYP framework made it easier for schools to be identified for restructuring and the old system California used capped the number of schools that could participate in restructuring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State heavily focuses its efforts on local control of restructuring efforts • State does not require state approval of restructuring plans • Provides TA to local educational agencies (LEAs) on procedural consideration of devising a restructuring plan • Does not provide input or retain control over content • Continues to experience growth in schools identified as in need of restructuring
Florida	SDEs create catalyst to pressure LEAs to incite personnel and changes in conditions at the schools. They use publicity and symbolic financial sanctions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigns schools a state grade “A to F.” State grades determine financial rewards and public recognition. • Schools graded with a “D” or “F” must develop improvement plans and undertake mandated actions. • State provides under-performing schools TA, capacity building measures, and increased funding to lowest-performing schools • TA is provided by a School Wide Assistance Team (SWAT), which includes full-time school improvement liaisons, reading coaches, and formative assessment tools. • State takes bold action on schools scoring an “F” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All instructional staff reapply for jobs ✓ Differentiate pay for highly effective teachers ✓ Hire proven educational leaders ✓ Employ safety and attendance personnel ✓ Establish committee to oversee reforms ✓ Document efforts to enroll students in choice and supplemental services ✓ Document implementation of reading plans ✓ Report monthly progress ✓ Provide intensive support to students retaking graduation exams ✓ Establish extended day for academic credit recovery ✓ Employ reading and math coaches

Table 2. State Intervention Strategies for Under-Performing Schools

State	Strategies	Results
Florida (cont.)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make contractual guarantees to entering 9th grade students • For noncompliance of some LEAs, the state: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased presence in those schools ✓ Threatened to withhold discretionary funding and superintendent pay from LEA ✓ If LEAs resist, they have reduced monthly assistance by an amount equal to the superintendent's salary • Actions resulted in increased compliance, and SDE and LEAs reached a compromise
Hawaii	Has large number of schools not meeting AYP standards and has the highest rate of schools entering restructuring under NCLB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of education approved to solely rely on outside providers to act as assistance providers • Use of outside providers conflicts with reform measures passed to decentralize school management • Overhead cost high due to private firm operations • Contracts for outside providers had to precede the release of achievement data and accountability determinations • State continues to struggle with scale of schools needing restructuring and funds to support restructuring
Maryland	<p>Established school accountability system that included a two-tiered school reconstitution framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently underperforming schools placed on state's "watch list" • Schools would become eligible for reconstitution • School boards to take over governance of schools • State to take over schools that fail to respond to local interventions • State later opted to contract with external partners instead of reconstitute the schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers union challenged state board's authority to take over schools and protected members' jobs • Court ruled that the state board of education may not enact regulations and establish takeover power, legislature later approved that authority • Hot debate over hiring private, for-profit contractors to run schools • Debated cost efficiency of for-profit providers • Eventually, legislature moved to pass legislation preventing the state from taking over additional schools • Legislative action increased emphasis on restructuring at local level • Emphasis on restructuring at local level where less dramatic approaches have been used

Table 2. State Intervention Strategies for Under-Performing Schools

State	Strategies	Results
Massachusetts	<p>Substantial intervention began in 2005–06. LEAs in the Commonwealth Pilot Initiative allows the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring school extensive authority over staff, schedule, budget, and program • Board of education passed new regulation in October 2006 that streamlined intervention process • Streamlined review process • Called underperforming schools “Commonwealth Priority Schools” • LEA must undertake a needs assessment and report findings to state • LEA has 6 months to create a reform plan • Administrators control staffing and building-level budget power • LEA must provide reading and math coaches, interim assessments, and review of student progress • Encouraged to consider external partnerships and/or charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger accountability for LEAs implementing school-level reforms • Strong set of requirements for turnaround plan design • Created “Ten Essential Conditions” for restructuring plans • Significant control in the hands of districts and school leaders • SDE focuses on a new system of support that emphasizes the district as the main vehicle for engineering turnaround using “Ten Essential Conditions”
Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools moved through NCLB timeline without improving • State has high percentage of schools in restructuring • Had undertaken improving school performance prior to NCLB • State stresses an individualized approach and closely reviewed LEA plan • Created options for states in restructuring • State does not allow state takeover as an option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of using academic coaches to build capacity at the local level • Program stresses the role of coaches in building the capacity of local officials to make decisions regarding restructuring plans • Provides funds to LEAs for restructuring • Provides a tool kit to schools entering the sanction stage • State provides direct TA to LEAs • State has attempted to ensure that LEAs make sound restructuring decisions • Growing problem of schools that are unresponsive to restructuring • Created trained teams to conduct program audits and provide year-long TA • State caught between desire to avoid taking over schools and need to take some action that will create meaningful reform • Officials prefer creating charter schools to closing unresponsive schools

Table 2. State Intervention Strategies for Under-Performing Schools

State	Strategies	Results
Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime example of “hands off” state with regards to restructuring • State provides TA but plays no part in the restructuring decision-making process at the LEA level • Since 1980s, law required districts undertake school intervention • State has few provisions for monitoring district compliance and intervention requirements • State reluctant to take on academic turnaround responsibilities • Adopted Statewide System of School Improvement Support that provides TA and coaching to LEAs • State does not approve or collect plans due to the belief that they are the legal property of the districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts formed district leadership teams charged with planning and implementing school restructuring • State funds 12 regional school improvement teams to provide coaching and TA in data analysis, research-based best practices, focused planning implementation, and monitoring professional development and resource management • Ohio legislature suggests breaking the states “hands-off” approach • Requires districts to be assigned an “academic distress commission” • Commission has authority to appoint and reassign school building administrative personnel, terminate their contracts, contract with private entities for management functions, establish budgets and approve expenditures, prevent collective bargaining agreements, and invalidate previous agreements • Ohio is currently designated as in a state of “academic emergency”
Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking corrective action against LEAs that fail to take necessary degree of school reform • Identifying and deploying individual leaders who can lead school intervention effectively • Makes decisions of intervention on dual accountability system • Board of education increased state’s power to direct reforms in schools that remain unaccredited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identification and training of effective school leaders ✓ Three training programs for turnaround specialists, district leadership academy specialists, and Turnaround Leadership Institute • State has been criticized for relying on individual leader for turnaround and not addressing systemic problems that retard stagnant systems

Note. Information obtained from *The Turnaround Challenge* supplement to the main report (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007).

Table 3. District Turnaround Strategies

District	Strategy	Results
Chicago's Renaissance 2010 (Ren 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to shut down approximately 70 district schools for under performance or under utilized space • Aims to open 100 schools by 2010, new starts • District issues request for proposal for each new school that is opened as a charter school, contract school, or performance school • Most schools will house no more than 600 students • School will be held accountable for meeting student achievement goals in exchange for increased autonomy • All neighborhood students are eligible to attend Renaissance schools • Number of schools will depend on quality of proposals and will be held accountable for meeting stated student achievement goals in exchange for more autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too soon to determine success • Student achievement in Chicago Public Schools rose dramatically in 2005–06 on state standard test • Chicago's charter schools performed better than the available neighborhood schools 75% of the time • Has strong political foundation • Substantial interest from community members, private organizations, parents, and teachers • Has to address concerns about closures • Some concerned about the oversight provided to schools and district involvement in schools
Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized, tight management by district • Used one core set of strategies for quick turnaround • School options featured charters, magnets, controlled choice schools, I Choose! Program, new high school models, K–8 centers, state scholarship-based choice, and NCLB choice options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues with state's history of school choice • Zone Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Uniform core curricula ✓ Intensive teacher development ✓ Capacity building for school leaders ✓ Longer learning day and learning year ✓ Longer class periods ✓ Support for key student transitions ✓ Teacher contracts include incentives ✓ Enabled personnel changes • In 2004–05, Zone Schools received higher marks than non-zone schools • District faced with sustaining progress • District has strong community involvement and successful partnerships with unions

Table 3. District Turnaround Strategies

District	Strategy	Results
New York's Children First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A district-wide effort • Empowerment - the heart of the strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Greater authority over instructional decisions ✓ More resources over the course of a 4-year performance period and more discretion over spending ✓ Fewer administrative requirements ✓ Network of self-affiliated schools supported by team of instructional and business staff selected by schools ✓ Additions to empowerment - schools can select from three types of empowerment schools, central bureaucracy further reduced, school leaders have flexibility to recruit and keep best teachers • Clear performance reporting to parents and tools to accurately measure and analyze data • Enhanced autonomy • Rewards for strong performance • Consequences for chronic low performance • Allows more autonomy and budgetary control for LEAs and in return demands greater accountability • Despite autonomy, all schools remain subject to direct public authority and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic achievement, higher graduation rates, safer schools, more high quality school options, less bureaucracy, higher teacher salaries, new buildings, and huge increases in private support • Strong political foundation • Surveys of pilot Empowerment schools indicate high levels of satisfaction from empowerment school principals • Constitutes some of the most significant systemic reform underway in any district in the country • District has had challenges with district middle management that has resisted change • SDE culture has reported to have changed
Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model	<p>Strategy has been to introduce "market forces through private contracts, charters, and university partnerships; to provide some intensive district support; and to use the state takeover status to increase flexibility from contractual obligations"</p> <p>Restructuring approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K–8 restructuring and phase out of middle and junior high schools • Small schools - open 66 small high schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance has improved after a 4-year effort • Gains were on par with gains from similar low-achieving schools • No significant effects in reading and/or math from privately managed schools • No significant effects (+ or -) in reading and/or math for Sweet 16 schools • Restructured schools - no positive effects in math in all 3 years of implementation and in reading in the first year

Table 3. District Turnaround Strategies

District	Strategy	Results
Philadelphia's Diverse Provider Model (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweet 16 schools - 16 schools provided with additional funding to pursue successful strategies Charter conversion Creative action and results regions - 12 schools that have not met standards and are under district led interventions Partnership Model – seven external providers hired to manage 45 of district's 264 schools. District retains management authority of each school's budget and exercises control over curriculums, time, facilities, special education, etc. District and multiple private organizations share management responsibility for academic and operational activities of low-performing schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thin-management does not provide improvements above and beyond norm District restructuring efforts seemed more effective than expected Contracting out services has not resulted in cost savings

Note. Information obtained from *The Turnaround Challenge* supplement to the main report (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007).

An examination of the districts' turnaround strategies indicated the need for the following:

- Dramatic, fundamental change to replace incremental reforms that have not produced results
- Changed operating conditions such as union-negotiated flexibility in hiring, evaluation, hours and pay, incentives, personnel deployment options, and other work rules
- Application of a greater capacity to accomplish turnaround, in part through intensive collaboration with external providers
- Additional investment

Regarding state participation, the turnaround challenge research indicated that meaningful change in chronically under-performing schools is more likely when the state assumes an active role. Also, change was less likely to occur when states fail to, at minimum, take affirmative steps to ensure that LEAs engage in effective restructuring practices. Also, the state has an important role in defining the type of restructuring that is required.

An analysis of the research findings suggested the following:

- State policy is needed to establish criteria for turnaround that among other things, creates the flexible, supportive kinds of operating conditions that turnaround leadership teams need in order to succeed.
- Attention is needed on capacity-building (both internally in schools and districts and externally among lead turnaround partners) and for mechanisms that will help organize turnaround work in clusters of schools for the sake of both efficiency and effectiveness.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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