Linking State and Local
School Improvement

Measures of Last Resort

Assessing Strategies for State-Initiated Turnarounds

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Executive Summary

With enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), responsibility for improving student outcomes is back where some say it has always belonged—under states' purview. No longer will prescriptive federal requirements dictate how states should identify, support, and turn around the lowest-performing schools and districts. Instead, states are empowered to craft their own "evidence-based" turnaround strategies.

Recent state-initiated turnarounds have taken many forms including collaborative options that leverage school districts as partners, targeted turnarounds via state-managed school districts, and comprehensive district takeovers that target both management and instruction. Ultimately, all turnarounds aim to catalyze improvement in student outcomes. Yet the evidence base around these strategies is surprisingly weak. And existing research fails to answer key questions: Which strategy is best? Under what conditions? How can states compare the various approaches and results?

Measures of Last Resort helps fill the gap. The report identifies various mechanisms states can use to intervene in schools and dives deep into nearly a dozen recent turnarounds in eight states. It maps the five common turnaround approaches: state support for local turnaround, state-authorized turnaround zone, mayoral control, school takeover, and district takeover. And it analyzes what is known about state-initiated turnaround in all its forms.

Key takeaways include:

- While rigorous evaluation shows that all of these efforts can improve student outcomes, no single approach is the clear "winner."
- Each approach has advantages and drawbacks that states should weigh given their own context and that of the districts and schools they hope to improve.
- One state's "success" can be another's "failure" if turnaround ideas are imported with little attention to state and local factors that made the original effort work.
- A strategy's success largely depends on factors and actors outside the state's control—even when states have the authority to take unilateral action. Ultimately, what schools and districts can accomplish once the state assumes increased oversight is more important than how states intervene.
- While adopting multiple strategies may maximize the odds of success, very few states employ all the strategies in the report; even fewer do so in a strategic and targeted way to support school improvement.

The report draws on myriad sources, including examination of state laws and regulations, interviews with policymakers, educators, and community groups, review of recent turnaround research, and analysis of state-initiated turnaround impacts on student achievement from the most rigorous evaluations available.

While states' efforts to direct local school improvement often draw controversy, this report's findings suggest that not every state-initiated turnaround is destined to provoke strife and end in failure. The report is designed to help states ensure their support is more targeted, better received, and, ultimately, more effective.

The report includes three core findings.

① Four Ingredients Are Vital for Any State-Initiated Turnaround

Schools and districts struggle for many different reasons and can be improved with many different strategies. For any state-initiated turnaround to have a chance at success, those leading the turnaround—whether a state, district, school, or mayor—must have the same ingredients:

1. The **will** to initiate changes to practice
2. Sufficient **authority** to implement effective strategies
3. Adequate **capacity** to execute the turnaround plan
4. **Political support** to sustain changes over time.

While the mere presence of these ingredients does not guarantee success, their absence can bring a turnaround effort to a screeching halt.

② Seeing the Freedoms and Limits of Strategies in State and Local Context Is Key

The five types of state-initiated turnaround efforts vary in whether they target schools or districts for improvement, who they designate to lead the turnaround effort, and how much authority they give states to change school or district operations. States must consider the freedoms and the limitations a strategy grants them, as shown in the report. And states must know what each strategy requires of state, city, district, and local actors so they can find the best fit between their interventions and the on-the-ground realities in places where they plan to intervene. Because a strategy's likelihood of success depends largely on factors and actors outside state control, states must pick their strategies wisely, weighing elements like district leadership, state capacity, scale and scope of the turnaround, and the political appetite for change.

③ All State-Initiated Turnarounds Can Be Effective, But Results Vary

Rigorous evaluations show four of the five approaches to state-initiated turnaround have been found effective in improving student achievement in at least one state and/or district.[1] But variation in effectiveness is evident within each approach—hardly surprising given differences both in how states approached their work overseeing the turnaround and in school and district contexts. Also, states often embrace multiple initiatives as part of the turnaround effort with predictably disparate results. For all these reasons, while states should draw on other states' experiences, they need to approach imitation cautiously.

To address these findings and maximize the opportunity ESSA grants states to craft their own evidence-based interventions, the report recommends that states:

Build an Evidence Base

Given weak existing evidence on the effectiveness of state-initiated turnaround, states should evaluate their existing school improvement initiatives, tweak strategies based on local results and feedback, and identify when a particular strategy is likely to be most effective. States should consider deploying available federal dollars to research and evaluate their school improvement efforts.

Use More Than One Strategy

Because most states, by law or practice, rely on just one or two strategies, they fail to tailor their support to local needs. Combining strategies allows states to better triage problems in local schools and strategically use their own limited capacity. States should consider better support of entrepreneurial and innovative district and school leaders by clearing barriers and providing flexibility, brokering district and school supports from proven providers, and using more disruptive interventions when they can draw on skilled administrators and external support.

Seek Help

With limited capacity to directly manage turnaround efforts, state education agencies must tap both local assets (like teachers, principals, and community groups) and proven external assistance providers and school operators.

Choose Fights Wisely

One justification for an expanded state role in turnaround is to break local political deadlock, but politics can doom state efforts, too. While states are a critical backstop against local dysfunction, chiefs should be wary of engagements in localities with lethal politics, especially if they lack the backing of state policymakers. Chiefs must build and nurture political will for effective change.

Be Explicit About Sustainability

All turnaround approaches can be effective in the short term; few states have worked to ensure the transformational changes they seek to instill will last in the long run. States should be explicit about how they will stabilize effective turnaround strategies against state and local leadership turnover. Along with building local capacity and political support, they can codify elements of effective strategies, like principal autonomies or collective bargaining limits, into state law.

Explore Options for State-Local Collaboration

Since all approaches to state-initiated turnaround require local support to have a shot at success, states should consider options that preserve local control with state-brokered outside support to improve school conditions. Recent examples in this report suggest that states can include districts as meaningful partners while boosting the odds that effective turnaround strategies will take root and flourish.

Introduction

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) puts responsibility for improving student outcomes back where some say it has always belonged—under states' purview. No longer will prescriptive federal requirements dictate how states should identify, support, and turn around the lowest-performing schools and districts. Instead, states are empowered to craft their own "evidence-based" turnaround strategies. Recent history provides many examples of state-initiated turnaround, including collaborative approaches that leverage school districts as partners, targeted turnarounds through state-managed school districts, and comprehensive district takeovers that aim to improve management as well as instruction. Yet, the evidence base around these strategies is surprisingly weak. Existing research fails to identify the comparative effectiveness of alternative approaches or help states understand when particular strategies are likely to deliver the desired results.

This report addresses these gaps and provides a comprehensive look at state-initiated turnaround in all its varieties. The report identifies different mechanisms by which states can intervene in local schools and assesses what is known about their effectiveness in different state and district contexts.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This report documents how the state role in school and district turnaround has evolved over time and the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. Research for this report included:

- Examination of state laws and regulations.
- Interviews with 15 stakeholders—including state chiefs, district staff, community groups, and support providers—on the role of the state in turnaround, political and substantive impacts of state-initiated turnarounds, and implementation challenges.
- Review of recent evaluation evidence on state-initiated turnarounds and literature on conditions required for turnarounds to succeed.
- Deep dives in 11 cases of state-initiated turnaround in eight states: Oakland Unified School District (CA), Recovery School District (LA), Lawrence Public Schools (MA), Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (MA), Educational Achievement Authority (MI), Camden City School District (NJ), Newark Public Schools (NJ), New York City Department of Education (NY), The School District of Philadelphia (PA), Shelby County Schools iZone (TN), Achievement School District (TN), which included reviews of research and media accounts documenting the causes and impacts (both political and substantive) of the turnaround effort.
- Appendix A details the policy review, Appendix B includes background on the 11 cases selected for deeper inquiry, and Appendix C identifies the studies used to assess the effectiveness of state-initiated turnaround as a reform strategy.

The different approaches to state-initiated turnaround offer states a variety of ways to support school improvement: some empower states to directly shape the terms of the turnaround while others rely on local education leaders, some target selected schools while others seek to improve entire districts. While none of the approaches described in this report offer states a "silver bullet," state-initiated turnarounds can be effective at improving student outcomes.

All approaches to state-initiated turnaround—from the least disruptive to the most—require four ingredients to be successful: the **will** to make changes to practice, sufficient **authority** to implement effective strategies, adequate **capacity** to execute the turnaround plan, and **political support** to sustain changes over time. But none of the approaches provide states a surefire way to marshal the needed ingredients and each strategy includes liabilities that, left unaddressed, will compromise the success of the turnaround effort.

Schools and districts struggle for many different reasons and can be improved through many different mechanisms. While no single approach to state-initiated turnaround is superior to the others, state and district factors—including district leadership, the scale and scope of the turnaround effort, the political appetite for change, and state capacity to assume enhanced oversight and support—shape whether a given approach has a chance at success.

The different approaches are often pitted as rivals but states should consider employing multiple strategies at the same time to maximize their likelihood of success—for example, supporting entrepreneurial district superintendents where possible, intervening in schools where the state has access to enough talented teachers and school leaders to make success possible, and engaging in more expansive efforts where local leaders are supportive and states can draw upon established talent pipelines.

While controversy has often swirled around efforts by states to direct local school improvement, the findings relayed in this report suggest that not every state-initiated turnaround is destined to generate strife and end in failure. States can play a variety of constructive roles to support local school improvement and should not limit themselves to one option. With a broader toolset and better triaging, states can ensure their support is more targeted, better received, and ultimately more effective.

The Why and How of State-Initiated Turnaround

Although states are constitutionally responsible for public education, they have long delegated their responsibilities to local boards. But local boards sometimes need help and external pressure to improve. They can become embroiled in conflict, neglect groups of children, or spend the district into bankruptcy. When these things happen, state government needs the authority to catalyze dramatic change. And with ESSA, states are now empowered to develop turnaround strategies that will work best for their circumstances.

State involvement in the work of school and district turnaround is often framed as a radical impingement on local control; in reality, it can be a modest extension of existing state authority to ensure all students are offered a quality educational program, as most states constitutionally require. Until the 1970s, the funding and operation of public schools was mostly a local enterprise and states boasted few avenues for influencing local school systems. By the 1990s, states were increasingly exercising their authority over local public schools in an effort to improve them. This included school finance equalization measures that weakened a district's authority over K–12 spending, uniform standards for public schools that regulated teacher qualifications and the length of the day and year, and test-based accountability, which required annual achievement testing for public school students.[5]

New Jersey became the first state to take over a district when it intervened in Jersey City in 1989. Numerous states followed suit and by 2016, 35 had laws on the books that enabled the state to take over the management of schools and/or districts. The No Child Left Behind Act reinforced these trends by requiring states to strengthen oversight and support when local schools or districts failed to make adequate yearly progress toward improving student achievement.

DEFINING TURNAROUND

Turnaround is defined by significant and sustained improvement in organizational outcomes, but what that means in the context of schooling continues to evolve. Early efforts to turn around school systems often focused on improving managerial systems and addressing causes of fiscal distress.[2] Today, turnaround refers to the "rapid and significant improvement in the achievement of persistently low-achieving schools."[3] Both schools and districts can be the targets of turnarounds, and districts often play central roles in ensuring that school turnarounds find success.[4]

State-initiated turnarounds seek to change administrative and instructional practices that are often resistant to alteration through law and regulation. While state policy can require teachers, principals, and district administrators to do something, the state relies on local cooperation to ensure policy is implemented with fidelity and policy objectives are reached.

Proponents of state-initiated turnaround argue that states are uniquely positioned to address management failures and dysfunction in local public schools. States are less beholden to local interest groups, providing them far more freedom of action to change how funds are allocated, how schools are staffed, and how educators are supported.

ARE STATES BETTER POSITIONED THAN LOCALS TO ADDRESS THE TURNAROUND CHALLENGE?

In a democratic system, politics limits what policymakers can expect to accomplish. Effective policies that lack political support are unlikely to be sustained over time. Likewise, policies that are bolstered by political support may endure long after they have been found to be ineffective.[6]

Policymakers at the state and local level represent different constituencies, may be beholden to different interest groups, and often hold different positions on particular issues. Because states can draw upon a different base of political support, they may pursue policies that would be impossible for local policymakers to embrace.

But state policymakers are not immune from politics. State administrators can be replaced, through appointment or elections, and hard-charging governors or state legislators can backpedal in the face of political opposition.

While a change in governance—from local to state—can enable new turnaround strategies to take root, it does not eliminate politics or ensure that strategies will be sustained over the longer term.

Rationales for state involvement in local public school systems have evolved over time but they have almost always been reserved for schools and districts with a consistent record of poor performance—a measure of last resort. Most recently, the Obama Administration's flexibility waivers established a floor for these efforts: states were required to identify schools in need of improvement if their performance fell in the bottom 5 percent of schools statewide.[7] Identified schools were required to implement a turnaround plan that aligned with U.S. Department of Education-defined turnaround principles, with the local and state education agencies charged with overseeing and supporting that work. ESSA continues to focus states' work on the lowest 5 percent of schools statewide, but provides states with more latitude around how they approach the turnaround effort.

More disruptive interventions, like school and district takeovers, typically involve a small number of schools and/or districts. In Tennessee, for example, the Achievement School District's portfolio includes 25 schools out of more than 1,800 statewide. Even in New Jersey, where the state has a record of intervening to take over the management of school districts, just 4 districts out of 591 in the state (including the 51 districts that serve large numbers of low-income children) have been the target of increased state oversight.[8]

State takeovers are typically exercised only under extreme circumstances. While Louisiana authorized the takeover of low-performing schools in 2003, the state did not take action until 2005, when the Orleans Parish School Board refused to reopen the schools after Hurricane Katrina. Similar dire circumstances surrounded state takeovers in Oakland and Compton, California, where financial insolvency threatened to interrupt the education of millions of mostly poor and minority school children, and in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where the district superintendent was indicted on corruption charges.

Kenneth Wong and Francis Shen estimate that prior to 1995, 60 percent of state takeovers were for financial crisis or failures in management and just 27 percent included academic goals for students.[9] Today, most state interventions are justified on academic grounds, though financial dysfunction and corruption are often present and may prompt state action in cases that would otherwise go unnoticed.

The increased focus on improving students' academic achievement has led to renewed urgency in the work involving turnaround, and has greatly complicated how states intervene. While financial mismanagement and corruption may be addressed by changes to accounting practices and procurement systems, improving outcomes for students requires states to reach far more deeply into the operation of local schools, as well as to draw upon talent and expertise outside of the state education agency's (SEA) traditional compliance roles.

A Range of Approaches to State-Initiated Turnaround

When state-initiated turnaround first emerged as a reform strategy two decades ago, the options were clear: States could do nothing or they could take over the management of the school or district. States' approaches to turnaround have evolved considerably and today, state policymakers can pursue a variety of options. Table 1 summarizes the different approaches that have emerged and identifies the key dimensions on which they vary.

TABLE 1. All Approaches to State-Initiated Turnaround Aren't Created Equal

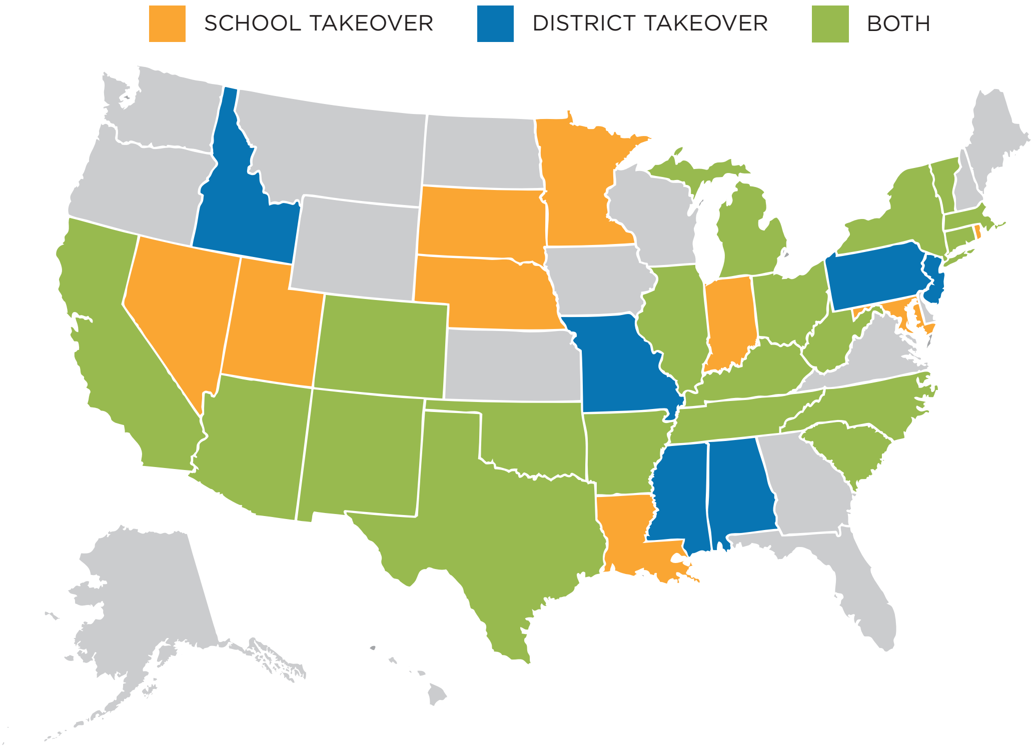
Description	*Target*	*Turnaround Lead*	*Level of State Authority*	*Examples*
STATE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL TURNAROUND				
Targeted assistance and/or oversight for low-performing schools or districts	School or District	District	State can encourage changes but generally can't alter site-level conditions	North Carolina's Turning Around Lowest Performing Schools (TALAS) program; California's School Assistance and Intervention Team
STATE-AUTHORIZED TURNAROUND ZONE				
State provides select districts/schools with additional freedom from state and district rules	School or District	District or Independent Board	State can require certain changes as condition of participation	Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (MA); Memphis iZone (TN)
MAYORAL CONTROL				
State authorizes mayor to take control of the local board via appointment power	District	Mayor	State is dependent on mayor to make changes	New York City (NY); Cleveland (OH)
SCHOOL TAKEOVER				
State intervenes directly in individual schools to take over management via state-run district or appointment of a receiver or external manager	School	State	State can alter site-level conditions in targeted schools	Tennessee's Achievement School District; Massachusetts receivership program
DISTRICT TAKEOVER				
State intervenes directly in the district to take control of operations via state appointment of board members or district receiver	District	State	State can alter district management and site-level conditions in targeted schools	New Jersey (receiver); Pennsylvania (board appointment)

Source: *Author analysis of state school improvement policies*

The mechanics of state-initiated turnaround vary substantially across the alternative approaches in terms of whether they target schools or districts for improvement, who they designate to lead the turnaround effort, and how much authority they provide to states to change school or district operations. These factors are critical to evaluating the impact of any given takeover, as the alternative approaches target different entities and entail different roles for the state.

Traditional district takeovers focus the state's intervention on improving district management and typically provide states (or their agents) with substantial discretion to take unilateral actions to change administrative practices or alter school operating conditions. States in this position can opt to reallocate resources, renegotiate collective bargaining agreements, and contract with charter management organizations (CMOs) or other support providers to operate district schools. This provides states with maximum leverage to influence the turnaround effort. Twenty-five states currently have the authority to assume management of school districts, though fewer have actually exercised it (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. An Idea Spreads: School and District Takeover in the United States



Mayoral control is a popular variant of a traditional state takeover and has been used in a number of large urban school districts.[10] However, because the state's agent in this model is an independent elected official, it provides states with little operational control over the school district and makes reform dependent on the mayor's own political coalition and future. In New York City, for example, some of the reforms initiated under former mayor Michael Bloomberg and his chancellor, Joel Klein, were withdrawn upon the election of Bill de Blasio as mayor, who drew upon a different base of supporters and brought his own reform agenda to the schools.[11] Mayors are also subject to the same electoral and patronage pressures that school boards face and can be equally as vulnerable to corruption.[12]

In more recent years, states have increasingly sought to limit the scope of their interventions to a smaller number of low-performing schools. This has resulted in new school-based strategies that empower states to alter administrative and instructional practices in targeted schools but leave other schools and the host district largely untouched.

Twenty-nine states currently authorize the state to take over the management of low-performing schools, though their approaches vary. Some states have moved toward creating special state-managed turnaround districts, which in turn either operate the schools directly or contract out the management to outside providers (for example, CMOs) that assume operational control. Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD) was authorized in 2010 to turn around the state's "priority schools," which fell in the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools statewide. Modeled after Louisiana's Recovery School District (RSD), the ASD currently manages 25 schools in Memphis and Nashville, most of which are operated by charter schools. Currently, four states operate a statewide district (Michigan, Nevada, Tennessee, and Louisiana) though at least twelve other states have considered similar measures.[13]

States have historically relied on other mechanisms, including reconstitution, chartering, and receivership to turn around individual schools. Massachusetts, for example, authorizes the Commissioner of Education to designate a receiver for Level 5 schools—the lowest category in the state's accountability framework—who acts as the state's agent to implement a turnaround plan. Currently, four schools are under state receivership, with most being operated by CMOs that specialize in turnarounds.

While these strategies have become attractive to policymakers because they limit the scope of the intervention, they leave the host district largely untouched, which may prove problematic if targeted schools are ultimately expected to return to the local school district. This challenge was made clear in Louisiana when the state legislature passed legislation in 2016 that required schools currently overseen by the RSD to return to Orleans Parish School Board, which had not undergone preparations to assume management of the schools.

Both school and district takeovers allow states to act without local cooperation—a characteristic that is both a virtue and a vice of these reform models. Given the controversy that inevitably comes with intervening in local school systems, most states prefer to support improvement without assuming direct control (and responsibility) for the turnaround effort. All states provide some form of support to low-performing schools and districts, as required by federal law. But states approach this work differently. According to a review by REL Central, 41 states authorize their SEAs to conduct an instructional audit or external evaluation to inform the improvement plan's development. Two-thirds provide SEAs a role in the development of the improvement plan and/or allow the SEA to monitor implementation of the plan.[14] Some states, such as California and Texas, require intensive coaching and oversight by intervention teams for targeted schools and districts. Other states take a more hands-off approach, entrusting the school district to oversee school turnaround efforts. In Idaho, for example, the state manages most of its oversight and support for turnaround via web-based tools, which enable tracking of relevant components and sharing of resources.[15]

State-authorized turnaround zones have emerged as an alternative strategy that provides states with enhanced authority to shape the parameters of the turnaround effort but stops short of direct control over school and district operations. In an informal review, CRPE found that 18 states—Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia—currently authorize some form of a zone with additional flexibilities for participating schools, though not all explicitly focus on turnaround.

The details of this strategy vary considerably from state to state, with some states requiring more significant changes to how the district manages schools in the zone. Tennessee's First to the Top legislation authorized districts to intervene in priority schools through a district-initiated "innovation zone" but provided few stipulations on how these zones were constructed. The Memphis iZone, one of several created in the state, provides priority schools with additional autonomy and significant turnaround funding to support school improvement. Massachusetts, on the other hand, worked collaboratively with Springfield Public Schools to negotiate substantial changes to key operating conditions for schools in the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership.

SPRINGFIELD EMPOWERMENT ZONE PARTNERSHIP: STATE-LOCAL COLLABORATION FOR SCHOOL TURNAROUND

The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP) was established in 2014 through a partnership between Springfield Public Schools (SPS) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The goal of the zone is straightforward: to dramatically improve outcomes in eight SPS middle schools. Unlike many other "innovation zones," SEZP is governed by a memorandum of understanding that formally establishes the roles of the zone's board and SPS and identifies operational autonomies for schools. It operates as a shared governance model with an appointed board that includes the district superintendent, members of the local school board, and state appointees. School leaders enjoy substantial flexibility over budgeting, with 80 percent of per-pupil funding managed at the school level and the remaining 20 percent going to centrally provided supports and administration. A new collective bargaining agreement for SEZP provided school leaders additional flexibility over staffing while enabling teachers to have more voice in negotiating site-level working conditions through new building-level leadership teams. Unlike a school or district takeover, the SEZP leverages its partnership with SPS to support operations and provide continuity for students and families in Springfield. Unlike state support for local turnaround, SEZP enabled the state to shape key parameters of the turnaround effort, including important changes to the operating conditions in targeted schools.

The Effectiveness of State-Initiated Turnaround

Contemporary state turnarounds aim to significantly improve outcomes for students and as a result, their effects on student achievement have been central to judging their effectiveness. This report draws upon eight recent evaluations of turnaround efforts representing four of the five state turnaround strategies outlined in Table 1. Studies on the mayoral control strategy did not meet selection criteria for analysis in this report (see box, "Examining the Effectiveness of State-Initiated Turnaround"). These studies cannot tell us whether a given strategy will be effective (or ineffective) in all contexts. The impact of any state-initiated turnaround depends on the specific strategies pursued as well as whether they were implemented with fidelity. But these studies do provide an evidence base around what approaches have been used more or less successfully.

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE-INITIATED TURNAROUND

This report draws on evaluations that use rigorous methods as defined by contemporary approaches to policy analysis.[16] Only recent evaluations (less than ten years old) were considered, given the evolution of turnaround strategies. To be included, a study had to (1) employ rigorous methodology, and (2) consider the impact of the state-initiated turnaround on student achievement. Eight evaluations met these criteria, representing a tiny fraction of the states and districts that are engaged in this work.

Four of the five approaches to state-initiated turnaround are analyzed in this report: state support for local turnaround, school takeovers, district takeovers, and state-authorized turnaround zones. While several studies have documented the impact of mayoral control, including evaluations of specific initiatives and broader achievement trends, none met the criteria for inclusion in this analysis. Table 2 summarizes the evaluations reviewed for this report. Appendix C lists the studies reviewed, including those that did not meet one or more of the criteria for inclusion.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

TABLE 2. Evaluating the Effectiveness of State-Initiated Turnarounds

Approach	*# of Implementation Years Evaluated*	*Source*
MASSACHUSETTS' SCHOOL REDESIGN GRANTS		
State support for local turnaround	3	LiCalsi et al. 2015
MICHIGAN'S SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT (SIG) PROGRAM		
State support for local turnaround	3	Rice et al. 2014
NORTH CAROLINA'S TURNING AROUND LOWEST PERFORMING SCHOOLS (TALAS) PROGRAM		
State support for local turnaround	4	Henry, Guthrie, and Townsend 2015
LOUISIANA'S RECOVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT (RSD)		
School takeover (via state-run district)	3	Harris and Larsen 2016
TENNESSEE'S ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD)		
School takeover (via state-run district)	3	Zimmer, Henry, and Kho 2016
LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS		
District takeover (via receiver)	2	Schuler, Goodman, and Deming 2016
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA ("SWEET 16," RESTRUCTURED, & PRIVATE PROVIDERS)		
District takeover (via board appointment)	3	Gill, Christman, and Blanc 2007
MEMPHIS IZONE		
State-authorized turnaround zone	3	Zimmer, Henry, and Kho 2016

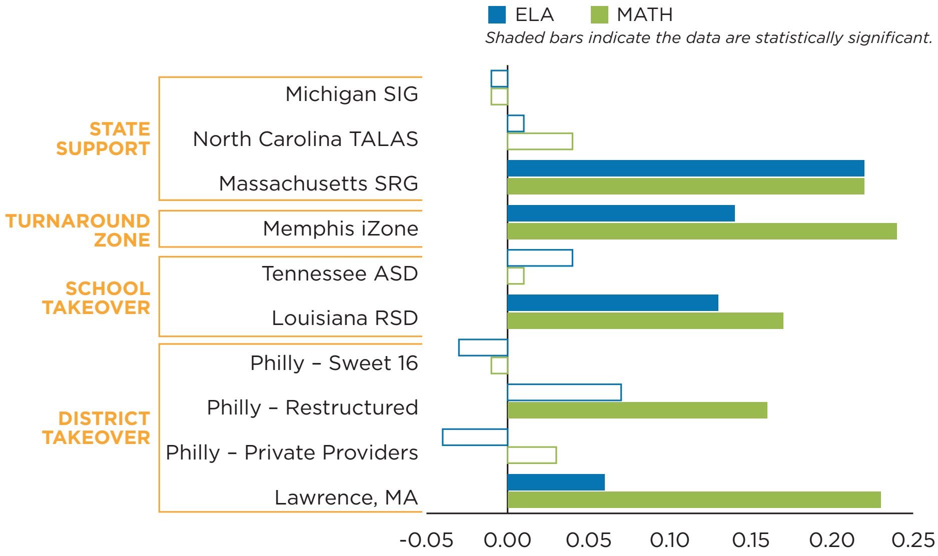
Source: *Author review of evaluation literature on the effectiveness of state-initiated turnaround. Table indicates the number of implementation years included in each analysis as well as the source for the original study.*

All evaluations focused on a single case of state-initiated turnaround, but the study of Philadelphia reported results for three separate initiatives employed by the district, which has a state-appointed board ("Sweet 16" schools, restructured schools, and schools managed by private providers). Several studies did not focus on state-initiated turnaround but rather evaluated the impact of one piece of broader reform efforts, such as charter schools in Newark or small schools in New York City. These studies were reviewed but were not included, ensuring that reported impacts reflected the broader effects of the state's turnaround strategy, rather than stand-alone initiatives.

Many of the studies pursued multiple estimation strategies and as a result, presented multiple estimations of the intervention's impact. In these cases, results were pooled and averaged. Most of the evaluations considered estimated impacts after three years of implementation, with the exception of North Carolina, which reported impacts after four years, and Lawrence, Massachusetts, which reported impacts after two years.[17]

Figure 2 shows findings from rigorous evaluations of the impact of state-initiated turnarounds on student achievement in standard deviation units (commonly referred to as effect sizes). Using effect sizes enables comparisons across sites that use different student assessments.

FIGURE 2. State-Initiated Turnarounds of All Types *Can* Effectively Improve Student Achievement But Not All *Do*



Notes: *Figure presents all results in standard deviation units where the outcome of interest is student achievement.*

Source: *Author review of evaluations reported in Table 2.*

While critics of state-initiated turnarounds are quick to point to districts where the state intervention did not work as intended, several evaluations suggest that states can effectively support improved student achievement. All four of the approaches evaluated were found effective in at least one context, with significant effects ranging from 0.13 to 0.24 standard deviation units. For comparison's sake, the Tennessee class size initiative, which reduced class sizes of between 22 to 26 students per class down to 13 to 17 students per class, found effects on the order of 0.11 standard deviation units in reading and 0.22 standard deviation units in math.[18] This means that state-initiated turnarounds can achieve effects similar to those found in other kinds of K–12 reforms.

The evidence base around the least disruptive intervention—state support for low-performing schools and districts—is the most discouraging: out of three evaluations reviewed, just one identified a positive impact. Given that all states are currently engaged in this approach, more research is needed to understand how states can make their support more targeted and effective.

There is no evidence that more disruptive approaches are more effective than less disruptive ones. The Massachusetts School Redesign Grant program, which provided schools with enhanced funding and support, was able to achieve results similar to the state's takeover of Lawrence Public Schools, where the state assumed control of the district's operations.

States should do more to learn from the experiences of other states, but they must approach imitation cautiously. While several states have moved toward creating special statewide school districts to manage school turnaround, it should not be expected that other states will achieve results on par with, for example, Louisiana, where large infusions of talent and philanthropy and weak opposition enabled reforms to take root. The variability in local contexts gives no guarantee that a strategy deployed with success in one district or state can be replicated in another. One state's success can easily be another's failure if policy ideas are imported with little attention to the factors that made the turnaround effort effective in the first place.

Unfortunately, few of the evaluations reviewed examined why particular interventions failed to achieve their intended impacts or what made effective ones so successful. This leaves state policymakers with scant resources for determining how to improve existing programs or develop more robust intervention strategies.

A Recipe for Success

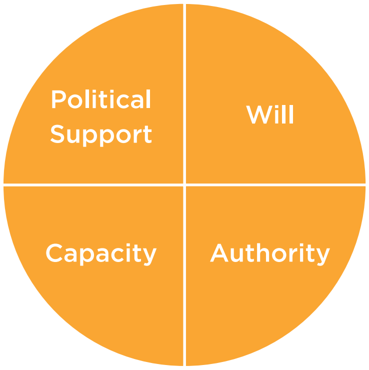
Will, Authority, Capacity, and Political Support

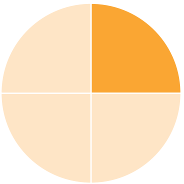
While these studies show that states can lead effective turnarounds, variation in each approach makes clear that none offer a "silver bullet" strategy. What schools and districts are able to accomplish once the state assumes increased oversight of local schools is ultimately more important than how the state intervenes.

What factors shape the effectiveness of state-initiated turnaround? The large literature on school improvement suggests that schools and districts struggle for many different reasons and can be improved through many different strategies.[19]

But whether state-initiated turnarounds result in schools and districts using effective turnaround strategies largely depends on whether they have the **will** to initiate changes to practice, sufficient **authority** to implement effective strategies, adequate **capacity** to execute the turnaround plan, and **political support** to sustain changes over time. These constitute the key ingredients to any state-initiated turnaround.

FIGURE 3. These Key Ingredients Are Essential for an Effective Turnaround Strategy





Will to initiate changes to practice: The will to initiate change is often assumed. But schools and districts must pursue difficult changes to how they are organized, staffed, and resourced to support improved student outcomes.[20] Existing leaders may be accustomed to the way things are, benefit materially from current arrangements, or lack the vision or drive to develop a new strategy. Research shows that effective turnaround leaders are goal oriented, strategic, and able to advance a strong theory of action.[21]

Many turnaround plans are never initiated because the leadership lacks the will—not a way—to improve outcomes. In Washington, for example, schools participating in the state's School Improvement Grant (SIG) program often confronted district barriers to implementing their plans, and district administrators were unwilling to address those barriers. They disapproved school leaders' proposed turnaround plans, citing unfamiliarity with new curriculum and other changes, and failed to protect schools from "last in, first out" seniority provisions, which were especially salient as budget cuts forced layoffs that disproportionately impacted schools in turnaround.[22] States, like their counterparts in schools and districts, also may lack the will to initiate changes. In the case of Washington, as was true in many other states overseeing SIGs, the state did little to address the shortcomings in district support, despite the fact that they oversaw implementation of the grants and could rescind funding from participating districts.

As the Washington example illustrates, state-initiated turnarounds are particularly vulnerable to failures of will because roles and responsibilities for results are often ambiguous and leadership breakdowns can emerge at the state, district, or school level.

Sufficient authority to implement effective strategies: Authority defines the range of options available to the turnaround leader: reallocating resources toward more effective programs, hiring and retaining effective staff, shifting the length of the school day and year, reducing class sizes, and retaining additional supports for staff and students.[23] However, none of these are a given.

Turnarounds that make principals accountable for improvement but do little to empower them to make substantive changes may fail because ineffective practices remain unalterable. In the case of Washington, state and district leaders lacked the will to change policies that hindered the turnaround effort, but school principals lacked the authority to make those changes on their own.

If the allocation of money, staff, and time are negotiated at the state or district level, as is often the case, only state and district policymakers have the authority to negotiate changes. Inadequate authority can force turnaround leaders to make do with what they have rather than invest in proven turnaround strategies or tailor their approach to the needs of staff and students.

Adequate capacity to execute the turnaround plan: While authority enables someone to do something, it does not ensure they will pursue effective strategies or implement a given strategy well. Capacity defines the resources—including money, staff, and external supports—available to be deployed in the turnaround effort.

Talent is among the most significant capacity constraints states, as well as their partners in schools and districts, face in the work of turnaround. States have generally pursued one of three options to address gaps in capacity: (1) develop existing staff, (2) replace existing staff, or (3) use external operators and/or support providers.[24] Most state-initiated turnarounds rely on a mix of strategies. For example, Massachusetts' takeover of Lawrence Public Schools resulted in new central office administrators, replacement of 36 percent of principals in the turnaround's first year, and contracts with several external organizations (CMOs as well as community groups and the Lawrence Teachers' Union) to manage school turnarounds.[25] Likewise, the Achievement School District in Tennessee has used both chartering and direct management for targeted schools.

These approaches have important substantive and political implications. External operators are typically managed through a contract or charter that limits states' and districts' operational control. This can enable states (and their designees) to recruit school leaders that would otherwise be unwilling to engage in the turnaround effort. But it can result in political pushback, given that external operators do not typically employ unionized teachers and the loss of funds can put financial pressure on the district central office.[26] Replacing existing staff avoids some of these challenges by preserving traditional staffing arrangements for teachers and principals but is only feasible if schools and districts can secure effective replacements and existing collective bargaining arrangements do not overly encumber the turnaround effort.[27] A turnaround strategy focused on improving existing staff is generally less controversial but may also risk stalled progress if professional development is ineffective.[28]

Political support to sustain changes over time: All public organizations depend on political support. Policies and practices that lack support from the communities in which they are based are unlikely to endure over time.[29] This is especially true in the work of turnaround, where staff commitment is essential to the effort and strong ties between parents and schools are required to facilitate difficult and sometimes controversial changes to practice.[30]

Some policies and programs have a natural base of support. Constituencies that benefit from a program are likely to become allies and be willing to defend it against opponents. But the work of turnaround rarely generates natural allies. Immediate material improvements to schools is difficult to obtain and turnaround often disrupts existing school operations.

Mistakes, missteps, or failure to deliver results can quickly erode the state's base of support. Michigan's Education Achievement Authority's failure to deliver on improvements to schools in Detroit ultimately led to its dissolution as state policymakers struggled to support the agency in the face of political opposition.[31]

State-initiated turnarounds are sometimes framed as a way to circumvent local political processes that can impede action. But all reforms depend on political support to be sustained. Failure to secure support can stop a turnaround effort in its tracks. In Oakland, California, for example, the state-appointed administrator set out to right a failing school system, but parents and the local teachers union organized to oppose his plans to close schools, renegotiate union contracts, and redistribute funding and teachers across the district. Because of political pressure on the state superintendent, the administrator left in 2006 and much of his turnaround strategy was dismantled.[32]

This is not to say that the goal of any turnaround effort is to mollify opponents or avoid conflict. But conflicts are best weathered with a strong base of support.

Here, states' past experiences with state-initiated turnaround are illustrative. District takeovers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Camden, New Jersey, where local policymakers and civic elites welcomed state involvement, have been far less conflict-ridden compared to cities like Newark and Detroit, where the state lacked any base of local support.[33]

Failure to engage with community groups and address their concerns can also undermine the state's political position by triggering opposition from parents.[34] This has challenged turnaround efforts by the Achievement School District in Tennessee, where precious organizational resources were deployed to repair relationships with parents and the broader community.[35]

The presence of these ingredients does not guarantee that a given turnaround effort will be successful. However, the failure to marshal the requisite will, authority, resources, or political support can bring the turnaround effort to a standstill.

No Silver Bullet

States typically have two options for assembling the required ingredients: (1) use the reform proposal itself to coerce or compel actors to do something, or (2) rely on the voluntary actions of other individuals or groups to provide the needed resources. Neither approach is necessarily superior to the other. When voluntary cooperation can be secured, executing a strategy is generally more flexible and less costly. But relying on other actors introduces risks that, by definition, the state cannot control. Figure 4 frames these alternatives as "assets" and "liabilities," and Table 3 identifies where the different approaches to state-initiated turnaround land across these dimensions.[36]

FIGURE 4. Assets and Liabilities Shape What States Can Accomplish on Their Own

ASSETS	LIABILITIES
Set of ingredients that the reform can stimulate or shape directly through the actions of state leaders.	Set of ingredients that the reform cannot stimulate, shape directly, and/or require voluntary cooperation from external actors.

All of the approaches to state-initiated turnaround fall short in that none offer states a surefire way to assemble the required ingredients. By definition, the pieces that are missing under each approach require action by actors that the state does not control, including educators and administrators working in local schools and districts, but also mayors, unions, and charter schools. State-initiated turnarounds are unlikely to find success if they do not address the underlying liabilities.

TABLE 3. Alternative Approaches Carry Different Liabilities

Assets: What the Intervention Provides	*Liabilities: What the Intervention Requires But Cannot Cause to Happen*
SUPPORT FOR LOCAL TURNAROUND	
Locally led turnaround that limits political controversy.	District/school has the will, authority, and capacity to make necessary changes to practice.
STATE-AUTHORIZED TURNAROUND ZONE	
Additional authority for schools to implement effective turnaround strategies.	Schools have the will and capacity to take advantage of authority.
MAYORAL CONTROL	
Locally elected leader can lend political support for turnaround effort.	Mayor has the will and capacity to implement effective strategies and can build long-term base of political support.
SCHOOL TAKEOVER	
Flexibility to ensure pace and scope of intervention matches available turnaround capacity.	State is able to build political support; threat of takeover will prompt improvement in local district, where schools will eventually return.
DISTRICT TAKEOVER	
District leadership, insulated from opponents who impede change, can undertake transformative reforms.	State has access to sufficient capacity to implement turnaround strategy and political support to sustain it.

The different approaches vary substantially in how they fall short. Support for local turnaround and turnaround zones provides states with less control and responsibility for the turnaround effort. As a result, they tend to be less controversial and engage fewer opponents. These approaches rely on school districts to use effective turnaround strategies, including changing how schools are staffed, organized, and use time and curriculum. Not all districts are equally poised to support this work and district superintendents can be hamstrung by local politics, insufficient administrative capacity, or weak educator pipelines.[37] States can identify gaps but cannot directly address them.

Many states pursue these strategies without considering whether the targeted schools and districts are in a position to address weaknesses. In North Carolina, for example, the SEA used federal funds to initiate the "Turning Around Lowest Achieving Schools," or TALAS, program. TALAS schools were required to implement one of the U.S. Department of Education's four turnaround models, which required schools to replace the principal. But many schools, especially in rural areas, struggled to find experienced replacements and the program failed to achieve its intended impacts on student achievement.[38]

Strategies that provide the state more authority eliminate the need for an able and willing district partner. Insulated from political opponents, states can take unilateral actions under school and district takeovers to support the turnaround effort, such as renegotiating collective bargaining agreements, reallocating resources, and sponsoring new schools.

School takeovers, like Tennessee's ASD or Massachusetts' receivership model, offer states a more flexible pace compared to district takeovers: states can scale the turnaround effort as they identify new sources of talent and support. But this approach does not address possible sources of dysfunction in the district, which may undermine the turnaround effort's sustainability and/or result in expanding performance challenges if the district cannot address its long-term problems. In New Orleans, state lawmakers passed legislation ceding control of the city's schools back to the Orleans Parish School Board. But the district had made few preparations to take on the functions of the RSD, which left some advocates wondering whether the gains of the takeover would be lost.

District takeovers address these challenges and provide states an opportunity to tackle systemic sources of low performance and financial mismanagement. But this approach demands substantial infusions of talent in both the central office and schools and requires significant political skill on the part of the state chief. States are not often prepared to initiate this strategy with success and any missteps are readily used by opponents to undermine political support for the takeover.

As a hybrid strategy, mayoral control provides states with less direct control over the turnaround effort but enables them to tap a locally elected leader who can draw upon their own base of support to navigate politically contentious changes. But this approach relies on the mayor to have the will and capacity to use effective strategies and build a long-term base of political support.

State and District Factors Shape the Effectiveness of Different Approaches

The liabilities described in Table 3 point to the conditions under which a given approach can find success. While all the approaches have limitations, state and district factors shape whether they are likely to be addressed.

District leadership: States need less authority when working with a willing and able district partner.[39] Under these circumstances, states can focus their work on clearing barriers and providing support to local leaders.

State capacity: States must rely on partners more when the SEA is understaffed or under-resourced, or if the chief lacks political support from the board, governor, or legislature.[40] Under these circumstances, states might target fewer schools or districts for intervention or contract with proven turnaround support providers.

Scale and scope of the turnaround: Sometimes, the turnaround challenge is confined to a small number of schools in a district. In these circumstances, states might focus their effort on improving individual schools through a combination of support and direct management rather than engage in broader district transformation efforts. When dysfunction is present across the district, especially if accompanied by corruption or financial mismanagement, a takeover strategy may be more effective. But large districts often require a substantial infusion of talent that is not always readily available. Weak talent pipelines and a lack of skilled turnaround operators can doom a district takeover, which in turn may substantially undermine any future state-initiated turnarounds. Here the mantra is, "Don't break it if you can't fix it." In these circumstances, states might choose to focus on smaller-scale interventions in individual schools or work more collaboratively with local districts to address weaknesses.

Political appetite for change: Even when states can take unilateral actions that bypass the local political process, chiefs can be undermined by political pushback. Interventions grounded in broad-based coalitions can do more in less time, and all state-initiated turnarounds work best when the turnaround is supported by a broad base of local stakeholders. States must understand the political landscape prior to initiating a turnaround; that context will inform what they can expect to accomplish and who can serve as allies in that work.

Turnaround Strategies Work Better Together

The characteristics of state-initiated turnarounds—their assets and liabilities—make them more or less suitable for addressing gaps in performance in a given locality. Because most states, by law or practice, rely exclusively on just one or two strategies, they fail to tailor their support to local needs.

While the alternative approaches to state-initiated turnaround can be seen as rivals, states should consider employing multiple strategies at the same time. For example, supporting district superintendents poised to initiate change, intervening in individual schools where the scope of the challenge is more limited, and engaging in more expansive efforts where local leaders are supportive and states can draw on established talent pipelines. This approach may result in state-initiated turnarounds that are more targeted, effective, and politically sustainable.

Just 19 states allow for both school and district takeover options, even though neither tool is likely to be effective in all cases. Many states have moved away from district takeovers even though this strategy can be more effective than others in some contexts, such as when districts face corruption, gross financial mismanagement, or large numbers of low-performing schools. Very few states use all the strategies described in this report, and fewer yet do so in a strategic and targeted way to support school improvement.

The traditional support that most SEAs offer schools and districts in need of improvement might be effectively combined with more disruptive interventions like district takeovers for cases where the district lacks either the will or the capacity to implement effective improvement strategies. Likewise, states that use district takeovers to address systemic challenges cannot practically use this strategy in every locality that may benefit from state intervention. In this case, school takeovers and turnaround zones might enable states to expand their reach to situations that would otherwise be ignored. Combining strategies enables states to better triage problems in local schools and be more strategic in how they use their own very limited capacity.

Of all the states considered in this report, just one—Massachusetts—has not only authorized a full complement of intervention strategies but also aggressively used those powers to support local school improvement, including both school and district takeovers, the creation of turnaround zones that generate meaningful changes in site-level operating conditions, and strategic deployment of school improvement grants to support local turnaround plans. All the systematically evaluated initiatives have found measurable success in improving student outcomes in Massachusetts.

A multi-pronged strategy has the additional advantage of strengthening the state's ability to support school improvement more informally. States that have a full complement of turnaround strategies are better equipped to use the latent possibility of an intervention to motivate local-level negotiation and consensus building.[41]

Conclusion

State-initiated turnarounds are a natural extension of other efforts that aim to improve local public schools and ensure all children have access to educational opportunity. But the work of turnaround is fraught with risks and engages states much more deeply in the systems they seek to influence.

Despite the challenge that turnaround presents, many states are exploring new options to support school and district improvement. Statewide school districts and turnaround zones have been added to the complement of support and direct management that states have historically used to address dysfunction. Recent evaluations suggest that state-initiated turnarounds can be effective at improving student achievement.

None of the turnaround approaches offer states a foolproof strategy for improvement. Like district-initiated turnarounds, for every example of success, an equal or greater number have ended with little to show for the effort.

One reason for the mixed results is that state interventions vary substantially in how they modify local public school operation, including whether the state is able to get talented people into the schools, marshal additional resources to support the turnaround, and get local administrators and parents to embrace the effort. State interventions that fail to address local gaps in capacity, improve operating conditions for teachers and principals, or build stakeholder support are unlikely to be successful.

While state interventions are often viewed as a “measure of last resort,” chiefs have significant discretion about when and whether to use state power to intervene—and whether to use the latent possibility of intervention to motivate local-level negotiation and consensus building. The latter is an important tool for state chiefs to drive improvement across the spectrum of school performance, rather than focus their efforts exclusively on the most critical cases.

Recommendations

To take better advantage of the tools available to support school and district turnarounds, states must craft new strategies that fully leverage the assets and address underlying liabilities. The newly reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act provides states a prime opportunity to do just that. States are no longer constrained by prescribed turnaround models or forced to use federal funds on particular interventions, as was previously required. Instead, states are empowered to develop their own evidence-based interventions.

To take advantage of this opportunity, states should consider targeted additional efforts to:

Build an Evidence Base

The evidence around the effectiveness of states’ school improvement initiatives is weak. States looking to expand their offerings and use more effective strategies should evaluate existing school improvement initiatives to determine if they are effective, adapt current strategies based on results and feedback from local stakeholders, and compare alternative strategies to identify when particular strategies are most effective. States should also consider tapping existing opportunities for oversight—including the newly authorized Title I school improvement funding—to understand what is and is not working.

Use More Than One Strategy

None of the strategies detailed in this report offer states a surefire way to support school improvement, but each is more likely to succeed under the right circumstances. To capitalize on local assets and mitigate potential liabilities, states need a much broader toolset than has historically been embraced. States should not limit their interventions to only schools or districts because neither entity is always positioned to effectively implement a turnaround strategy. And states should not embrace only the most or least disruptive intervention methods because some schools and districts need very little support while others require much more intensive oversight. With a more pluralistic approach, states could support capable district superintendents by clearing barriers and offering flexibility, providing innovative school leaders with options for additional autonomy and independence from local districts, and using more disruptive interventions like school or district takeovers when states have access to skilled administrators and external support.

Seek Help

State education agencies (SEAs) do not typically have the capacity to directly manage turnaround efforts themselves. SEAs must work harder to tap local assets, including teachers and principals, community organizations, and district administrators, and draw upon proven external assistance providers and school operators. While charter management organizations provide an attractive means for states to address low-performing schools, few operators have a proven track record of managing whole-school turnarounds.[42] States should tread carefully when employing this strategy—failure to deliver results can undermine their position in any future work on turnaround. To spur improvement and infuse traditional schools with new practices, states may consider using hybrid strategies that leverage models exemplified by high-performing charter schools, which has been found to be effective in some contexts.[43] Finally, external organizations provide states with needed capacity, but they do not absolve the state of responsibility. States must build capacity to oversee the work of external providers and support districts to do the same.

Choose Fights Wisely

One justification for an expanded state role in the work of turnaround is to break local political deadlock. But politics is the death knell of state-initiated turnarounds. Chiefs are rarely prepared to cultivate relationships with local community groups or build political will for change, but these activities are essential to the success of any turnaround effort. Chiefs should lay the groundwork for any intervention by identifying district leaders poised to be willing partners and developing relationships with local community groups who can advocate for change. While states provide a critical backstop against local dysfunction, chiefs should be wary of engagements in localities where the politics is lethal, especially if they lack the backing of state policymakers.

Be Explicit About Sustainability

The success of any state-initiated turnaround depends on both immediate and long-term results. All approaches to state-initiated turnaround can be effective in the short term, but few states have engaged in the intentional planning to ensure that the transformational changes they seek to instill in schools and districts endure long term. States should be explicit about how they will stabilize effective turnaround strategies from changes in state and local leadership. School-based interventions are particularly vulnerable to disruption, as pressure to return schools to local board oversight is strong. Building local capacity and political support will buffer these turnaround strategies from disruption. States might also consider codifying particular elements of effective strategies into state law—like autonomies for principals or limits on collective bargaining—to ensure they are firmly rooted in practice.

Explore Options for Crafting State-Local Collaborations

None of the approaches detailed in this report can be crafted and implemented by state administrators. They require support from local administrators, teachers, principals, parents, and citizens. States may consider crafting alternative approaches to state-initiated turnaround that preserve opportunities for local boards or administrators to be involved, but provide enhanced opportunities for states to broker outside support and alter site-level conditions. Recent examples, including local control legislation for New Orleans and the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership, suggest that states can include districts as meaningful partners while also enhancing the chances that effective turnaround strategies will take root and flourish.

Appendix A

Strategies States Currently Employ to Support School / District Turnaround

State	*School takeover*	*District takeover*	*Other intervention / support*
AK	✗	✗	Districts are required to implement improvement plans in "one star" and "two star" schools, or those with significant achievement gaps. Lowest-performing 5% of schools (priority schools) are required to implement a program improvement, next 10% (focus schools) must implement a deficiency-specific improvement plan. The state DOE approves plans. State specifies components of an improvement plan, assists in development of the plan, can provide technical assistance to the district.
AL	✗	✓	State intervenes in "priority" / "focus" schools to conduct needs assessment, provide support, and monitor implementation.
AR	✓	✓	State provides technical assistance to districts and schools in the effective use of interventions, processes, diagnostic analysis, development of needs assessments, building capacity, implementation of the Seven Turnaround Principles, and addressing instructional issues in a district or school that has not made sufficient progress in student achievement.
AZ	✓	✓	State requires schools designated as "D" or "F" to develop school improvement plan and assigns them a "school improvement team."
CA	✓	✓	California Collaborative for Educational Excellence supports school districts on achieving the goals of their Local Control and Accountability Plan. Statewide analysis program for all operations of underperforming schools, and support/technical assistance to improve performance. Underperforming local education agencies at risk of program improvement status are notified and assisted in developing a plan.
CO	✓	✓	Coaching/training, technical assistance for schools in Turnaround/Priority Improvement status.
CT	✓	✓	State uses a tiered accountability system of support to schools based on their ratings. Also, commissioner creates 20 "alliance districts" and 10 "educational reform" districts (lowest-performing 30 percent). Must create an improvement plan, additional funding withheld until approved.
DE	✗	✗	School Support Teams assigned to schools in "restructuring," "corrective action," "under improvement phase 2" (but no direct authority). Technical assistance to low-performing schools as part of Partnership Zone—district may not necessarily designate turnaround plan.

State	*School takeover*	*District takeover*	*Other intervention / support*
FL	✗	✗	Schools receiving a “D” or “F” are required to submit turnaround plans to be approved by state. State to provide support, assistance, and oversight, but cannot take over schools or districts. Districts may choose to reconstitute schools as part of turnaround plan.
GA	✗	✗	Proposal to create an “Opportunity School District” (similar to RSD) will go before voters in November 2016. Currently, low-performing schools are evaluated and work with state DOE to develop a school improvement plan, DOE provides technical assistance to local education agencies in “Needs Improvement” status.
HI	✓	N/A	Most underperforming schools undergo “restructuring,” partnering with outside consultants, but local district retains autonomy. New “Strive Hi” performance system uses increasing levels of supports and intervention for low-performing schools.
IA	✗	✗	Schools/Districts In Need of Assistance program, through the state, provides diagnosis, development of an improvement plan, and supports district/school leadership in monitoring implementation. School improvement services delivered by AdvancEd.
ID	✗	✓	Schools must develop strategic plans to improve education.
IL	✓	✓	Statewide system of support for school in corrective action. District and state supports.
IN	✓	✗	State Development Network initiated to provide varying levels of support, coaching, curriculum development, etc., to school districts.
KS	✗	✗	Accountability based on accreditation system: schools in improvement required to work with a State Technical Assistance Team. State has program called Kansas Technical Assistance System Network which supports districts in implementing best practices. State supports the districts in developing tools to support Focus/Priority schools by assigning Integrated Technical Assistance Team and a District Facilitator.
KY	✓	✓	System of supports for Priority and Focus schools: various programs through the “District 180” program: Innovation Hubs, Novice Reduction, assignment to a high-achieving “partner school,” ongoing technical assistance.
LA	✓	✗	Districts in crisis are provided with a team of distinguished educators to provide expertise, direction, and support. Must undergo an audit and make changes to curriculum, etc., but are not taken over by state.
MA	✓	✓	Superintendents create a turnaround plan, approved by Commissioner. LEA Superintendent can choose an outside operator for the school turnaround plan. If school deemed chronically underperforming, commissioner can create a turnaround plan that the school must follow, including appointment of a targeted assistance team for the school.

State	*School takeover*	*District takeover*	*Other intervention / support*
MD	✓	✗	Local leaders with focus/priority schools can choose from a menu of options and supports most aligned to their problems.
ME	✗	✗	Priority and focus schools match with a school-based improvement team and a DOE specialist to help for school improvement.
MI	✓	✓	5-level Customizable Turnaround Interventions: involvement from a high level of communication with State Reform Office to developing collaborative turnaround plan. Access to SIG funding, partner with external orgs.
MN	✗	✗	Focus and Priority Schools must work with MDE and the Regional Centers of Excellence to implement serious interventions aimed at improving the performance of the school's lowest-performing subgroups. Regional Centers of Excellence provide technical assistance to Title I Focus/Priority Schools.
MO	✗	✓	Provisionally accredited districts work with Regional School Improvement Team (comprised of local and regional leaders) who develop a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, and individual School Improvement plans. If continued low performance transitions to "Tier 4"/Unaccredited, and DEO can set up new governance structure/take over.
MS	✗	✓	Focus/Priority Schools can apply for SIGs: complete school assessment, develop action plans for improvement to be approved by LEA school board. LEA administrator provides oversight of improvement process. 1–20% of Title I funding at focus/priority schools must be delegated for interventions. SEA provides technical assistance and reviews LEA submitted action plan.
MT	✗	✗	Technical assistance by state.
NC	✓	✓	Low-performing districts must submit an improvement plan to state. "ASD-style:" system in the state Senate currently.
ND	✗	✗	Targeted technical assistance, developing an improvement plan, increased state oversight. Can be required to implement alternative governance, but ND law is limited. Some additional funds. Districts in improvement can become supplemental services providers.
NE	✓	✗	AQUESTT School Improvement program for ranking schools, Continuous Improvement Program: designates technical assistance to the district that has a Priority School.
NH	✗	✗	State works cooperatively with schools and districts to create a corrective action plan, including minimum requirements. State provides technical assistance, if requested by the school/district. If the commissioner doesn't approve the corrective action plan, commissioner can create the plan and the state board can direct the school board to implement.
NJ	✗	✓	District to develop an improvement plan. Commissioner can appoint a "highly skilled professional" to provide technical assistance to a district in needed areas.

State	*School takeover*	*District takeover*	*Other intervention / support*
NM	✓	✓	Differentiated technical assistance, professional development opportunities, tools to help schools in determining improvement opportunities. Level of support depending on Tier. Can include Progress Monitoring Visits, participation in Early Warning System.
NV	✓	✗	First two years of low performance, schools are assigned district-level technical assistance; after two years, are assigned state-level assistance. Uses Nevada School Performance Framework.
NY	✓	✓	Priority/Focus Districts create improvement plans. Title I Focus/Priority Schools receive additional funding. Must participate in Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) process. Current school year: receiver is designated as District Superintendent. Priority/Focus Districts required to provide school choice for Title I schools.
OH	✓	✓	Differentiated accountability system: for Priority schools, DOE assigns Transformation Specialist to each school, who helps school choose turnaround model. District staff assigned to help implement improvement model.
OK	✓	✓	State support to low-performing districts and schools. District must make an improvement plan.
OR	✗	✗	Schools in need of improvement must develop plans. Tiers of state support for priority/focus schools and districts. Receive technical assistance, and undergo a self-assessment process, and receive coaching support.
PA	✗	✓	LEAs with bottom 5% performing schools must develop comprehensive improvement plans, approved by state. Academic Recovery Liaisons assigned to priority schools for needs assessment and improvement strategies.
RI	✓	✗	Low-performing schools undergo diagnostics and planning, identify strategies for improvement, to be approved by commissioner. District can choose intervention model: close school or reopen under new management.
SC	✓	✓	“At risk” schools assigned a teacher specialist as part of a technical assistance strategy. Schools to review and develop improvement plan, with assistance from School Improvement Council. District superintendents and boards receive training.
SD	✓	✗	Priority schools must develop a turnaround plan aligned with 7 Turnaround Principles with help from the School Support Team. Technical assistance, with an emphasis on data analysis. Priority district also must create a turnaround plan, and use some Title I funding for a technical advisor, are assigned a DOE Technical Adviser.
TN	✓	✓	LEAs in need of improvement have to create a plan for corrective action/improve achievement.
TX	✓	✓	Low-performing schools are directed to form a community partnership team and campus intervention team. School to create a targeted school improvement plan.

State	*School takeover*	*District takeover*	*Other intervention / support*
UT	✓	✗	State board develops list of resources for assistance, trainings, etc., to low-performing schools. Low performing schools to develop turnaround plan, to be approved by LEA or charter authorizer.
VA	✗	✗	Development of a school improvement plan, including supplemental programs for students, using the Virginia Tiered System of Supports. Districts can also be required to develop a corrective action plan, which can be enforced by the state. VDEO provides technical assistance to schools and LEAs.
VT	✓	✓	Technical assistance to schools not making AYP for 4+ years.
WA	✗	✗	Required Intervention Districts are provided with an external review. District selects school improvement model. Districts must submit to SBE for approval. “Level Two” requires technical assistance from OSPI.
WI	✓	✗	System of intervention/recommendations and support for consistently low-performing districts.
WV	✓	✓	Early intervention system: providing technical assistance, staff development, monetary and staffing resources when needed. District: team of improvement consultants assigned in the case of “emergency circumstances:” create an intervention plan.
WY	✗	✗	Partially Meeting Expectations schools must file an improvement plan with the state. PE for two years and Not Meeting Expectations schools are assigned a representative from the DOE to assist with development of the improvement plan. After two years as NME, school principal may be fired. Representative can help provide additional supports to the school.

Appendix B

Summary of Cases Selected for Deeper Inquiry

These cases represent a non-random sample of prominent examples of state-initiated turnarounds. Researchers reviewed original research on the turnaround, interviewed key participants and observers, and consulted secondary media accounts. For each case, we assessed how the state intervened, what impacts it had on policies and practice, and the political ramifications of the intervention.

Oakland, CA

The state of California stepped in to take control of Oakland's school system in 2003 after years of growing financial deficits, shrinking student enrollment, and stagnant performance. Randy Ward, who had successfully served as state administrator in Compton, was appointed as Oakland's state administrator with all the powers of the superintendent and school board. Ward initiated changes to how schools were funded, staffed, and supported by the central office. Schools also faced enhanced expectations for performance, with alternative options sought when schools failed to improve. Many of the new schools first to open were managed by prominent community groups or experienced charter school operators. The Eli and Edith Broad Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided more than $12 million to develop the new systems, schools, and management capacities listed above. Though Ward possessed extraordinary powers and freedom of action, the initiative was affected by normal urban politics. Schools in the wealthier areas of Oakland, which would lose money if funds were redistributed on a strict per-pupil basis, were able to get special funding to allow them to keep their teaching staffs. The teachers union refused to believe that the district had come clean about its finances and mounted a successful strike, gaining significant salary increases, a return of placement preferences for senior teachers, and a reduction of principals' freedoms. The union also demanded Ward's firing and in the spring of 2006, the state superintendent, threatened with loss of union support for his re-election, pushed Ward out of the job. The state superintendent then appointed a cautious new administrator for Oakland and eventually returned control to the local school board in 2009. By 2010, most of Ward's initiatives had been incrementally eroded, though some vestiges of the pupil-based funding and new schools strategies remained.

Louisiana's Recovery School District

After Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco used a preexisting state authority to take over and operate or charter out persistently low-performing schools anywhere in the state. Prior to the storm, Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) was widely viewed as corrupt and plagued by financial mismanagement and the board did not actively resist the state takeover. The state's Recovery School District (RSD) took over 65 low-performing schools in New Orleans, leaving only 20 to be overseen by the existing OPSB. The state also used a newly enacted statute as authority to terminate the employment contracts of teachers whose schools were taken over by the RSD. As a result, OPSB was forced to fire 4,000 teachers. After a few months of slow progress, attorney Paul Pastorek became state superintendent of schools and hired former Chicago and Philadelphia schools CEO Paul Vallas to head the RSD. Together they set out to use chartering as their main method of reopening schools, and to attract school leaders and teachers (including many from Teach for America) from across the country. Teachers who returned early to New Orleans opposed the process of firing teachers, creating charter schools, and hiring teachers from new sources and were able to gain support from outside the city. The movement toward a fully chartered system brought new challenges including a complicated enrollment process, gaps in special education services, and problems with school discipline, which led to frustration for parents and a lawsuit by the Southern Poverty Law Center. By 2012, the RSD moved to address these problems through new centralized policies that sought to improve fairness and transparency systemwide. In 2016, the state passed legislation that provided for the return of RSD's schools in just a few short years. Charter schools would retain key autonomies and OPSB would take on functions previously managed by the RSD. Supporters of the reforms in New Orleans openly worried whether the change would be the end to the new model of governance embraced by the RSD.

Lawrence, MA

In 2010, Massachusetts reformed the state's accountability system. The Achievement Gap Act provided new power to the State Board and Commissioner of Education to intervene in schools and districts in the lowest tier of the state's accountability system. Lawrence was the first school district in Massachusetts taken over under the new law. Prior to takeover, Lawrence posted outcomes that put it in the bottom five districts statewide with only half of students graduating within four years. News of the takeover was met with worry by local parents and teachers but had support from the city's mayor. The state appointed Jeffrey Riley, a Boston Public Schools deputy superintendent, into the position of receiver. The receiver had broad authority to make changes to districtwide policies including the collective bargaining agreement and scheduling. Between 2013 and 2014, the district instituted a number of changes: reduced spending in the central office, enhanced school autonomy, partnerships with charter operators to manage turnarounds, investments in teacher and principal pipelines, a new collective bargaining agreement that ended step-and-lane increases, and expanded learning time. The district worked collaboratively with the teachers union on the new contract and the union has managed the turnaround of at least one of Lawrence's low-performing schools. Because of the collaborative approach, the turnaround effort has faced little opposition.[44]

Springfield, MA

The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP) was established in 2014 through a partnership between Springfield Public Schools (SPS) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The goal of the zone is straightforward—to dramatically improve outcomes in eight SPS middle schools. Unlike many other "innovation zones," SEZP is governed by a memorandum of understanding that formally establishes the roles of the zone's board and SPS and identifies operational autonomies for schools. It operates as a shared governance model with an appointed board that includes the district superintendent, members of the local school board, and state appointees. The board itself is self-perpetuating. School leaders enjoy substantial flexibility over budgeting, with 80 percent of per-pupil funding managed at the school level. A new collective bargaining agreement for SEZP provided school leaders additional flexibility over staffing while enabling teachers to have more voice in negotiating site-level working conditions through site-level leadership teams. The collective bargaining agreement was approved by over 90 percent of teachers. Unlike a school or district takeover, the SEZP leverages its partnership with SPS to support operations and provide continuity for students and families in Springfield. Unlike state support for local turnaround, SEZP enabled the state to shape key parameters of the turnaround effort.

Michigan's Education Achievement Authority

The Education Achievement Authority (EAA) was created in 2011 through an interlocal agreement between the emergency manager of Detroit Public Schools and the regents of Eastern Michigan University. Three schools were converted to charter schools while twelve were run directly by a board whose members are appointed by the governor. More charters may have been approved, but the district garnered just three on-time applicants. The district focused its reform efforts on pushing for competency-based and blended learning models, operating more like a traditional district or charter management organization than an authorizer or portfolio manager. Just 20 percent of the existing teachers were retained, creating a huge demand for new talent in the system. Controversy and trouble have surrounded the district since its creation. Enrollment in the schools plummeted by 25 percent by their second year, and high turnover and staff cuts resulted in further disruption for students. An EAA principal was indicted after allegedly taking kickbacks from a contractor. In late 2015, Governor Rick Snyder offered to dissolve the EAA if state lawmakers approved his plan for overhauling education in Detroit. By early 2016, the board of regents for Eastern Michigan University voted to end the interlocal agreement that created the EAA in 2011.

Camden, NJ

The State Board of Education in June 2013 voted unanimously to approve Governor Chris Christie's plan to seize control of Camden's schools at the end of the 2012–2013 school year. The struggling district posted some of the worst student outcomes of any district in the state, with only half of the city's high school students graduating and 90 percent of the schools in the bottom 5 percent of student achievement statewide. Like Newark and Paterson, two other cities under state control, Camden's school board is controlled by the state and any decisions the board makes can be overruled by state education officials. Camden Mayor Dana Redd, whose office had the power to appoint all board members prior to 2010, expressed optimism about the takeover. The state-appointed superintendent, Paymon Rouhanifard, replaced most of Camden's senior administrators including the superintendent and director of special education services. Among the most contentious changes undertaken by the new superintendent was the growth of charter schools under the new Urban Hope Act, which cleared the way for charter networks to set up neighborhood schools in the district. Three large charter networks have won approval for up to 15 new schools. In 2015, the district announced a streamlined enrollment process that retained a guaranteed seat at the neighborhood school. While the district has its critics, opposition has been relatively silent compared to other state takeovers in New Jersey and elsewhere.

Newark, NJ

State monitoring in Newark began in 1992 and included independent investigations by numerous groups. The takeover initially included new administrators (though previous administrators had tenure protections and could request a new post in the district), a new central administrative structure, and school improvement planning and supports. A series of state-appointed superintendents led the charge. In 2007, the state ceded some power back to the Public School Advisory Board over facility and management operations (the state maintained its power over finances, personnel, and instructional programs) but retained oversight over key district functions. In 2010, Mayor Cory Booker brokered a $100 million investment in the district by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerburg to support reform and other national foundations lined up to support charter school creation. At the same time, Cami Anderson was appointed as superintendent. Anderson launched her own round of reforms to the schools, including the introduction of eight "renew schools" and later, the One Newark plan that included closing several schools, restructuring others, and expanding charter schools. The teachers union opposed the reform plan because of lost teacher jobs in closed schools and their opposition to charter schools. Union organizers and money came to Newark from New York and other cities, and arguments against the "billionaire boys club" were imported from New York City. In 2013, Booker campaigned for and won a vacant U.S. Senate seat; Anderson lost one of her biggest local advocates. In 2014, the Board of Education voted to return financial management to the local board in Newark. Politics was an ever-present force in the takeover of Newark, but under Superintendent Anderson when it reached a fever pitch with protests, opinion pieces, and mayoral candidates speaking against her reign on a weekly basis. By 2014, Anderson, described as bereft of support, was still in her job and pushing forward with One Newark. New Mayor Ras Baraka, who ran on an anti-Anderson platform, made the case in editorials that the mayor, not the state, would be better poised to fix the city's schools. Anderson resigned in June 2015 and former state superintendent Christopher Cerf took her position as superintendent of the district.

New York, NY

After winning a landslide election in 2001, Mayor Michael Bloomberg sought state legislation that eliminated the 32 community school districts (CSDs) with elected school boards and provided broad powers to the mayor to run the school system. The return to mayoral control was sought in response to the dysfunction and layers of bureaucracy fueled by decentralization. Community school boards were disbanded and the Board of Education became the Panel for Educational Policy, a 12-member board of which seven members are appointed by the mayor and five by the borough presidents. The city's schools were initially grouped in ten regions and the board retained control of school budgets and capital spending but was barred from daily management. Chancellor Joel Klein took the helm of the system and launched a variety of efforts to improve instruction and administration, including new small high schools, more autonomy for school principals, and cuts to the central office. Many of the reforms resulted in clashes between the Bloomberg administration and the city's teachers unions, as well as disaffected middle-class parents. The union, middle-class families who resented loss of control of neighborhood school buildings, community groups who lamented the loss of CSDs, and liberals who objected to charter schools united in opposition to elect a new mayor, Bill de Blasio, who withdrew many parts of Bloomberg's reforms.

Philadelphia, PA

In 1998, the Pennsylvania state legislature authorized the takeover of school districts with Act 46. In 2001, in the face of growing financial problems, Superintendent David Hornbeck resigned and Governor Mark Schweiker launched a state takeover that suspended the powers of the school board, whose members were appointed by the mayor, and established a new five-member School Reform Commission (SRC). Three members, including the chairman, are appointed by governor, and two members are appointed by the mayor. The SRC brought in outside consultants to take over the management of 45 low-performing schools. Edison Schools, Inc. took 20 and another 25 were assigned to two other for-profit companies and two universities. In July 2002, the SRC made Paul Vallas, former CEO of Chicago Public Schools, the new CEO of district. The reforms intensely divided the city with labor groups, the NAACP, and many minority community leaders standing against the state takeover and the moves toward privatization. The education management organization (EMO) model was eventually phased out, in no small part because the results were consistently disappointing, with the new operators doing no better than district managed schools. In more recent years, the SRC has turned to nonprofit charter management organizations, a move that is hotly contested by many of the same groups that opposed the EMO model of earlier years. Unlike the earlier effort, the charter schools were authorized as part of the district's Renaissance Schools program, which provided opportunities for community input into selecting operators and retained the neighborhood schools' traditional assignment boundaries. Growing enrollment in charter schools coupled with declines in state funding have contributed to the district's continued precarious financial situation, with large and growing deficits. The Republican-led state legislature has balked at efforts to secure more funding for the city.

Tennessee's Achievement School District

In 2009, as part of the "First to the Top" legislation designed to secure federal Race to the Top funding, Tennessee crafted a new proposal for dealing with schools in the bottom 5 percent of student achievement statewide. The proposal granted authority to the Commissioner of Education to create the Achievement School District (ASD) with the express intention of turning around failing schools. State superintendent Kevin Huffman appointed Chris Barbic as superintendent of the ASD. The ASD relied on a mixed-delivery model—chartering some schools out to charter management organizations and managing others directly—and required all schools to continue to serve families within the school’s neighborhood assignment plan.

To facilitate the process of matching operators with schools, the ASD created a volunteer-led Achievement Advisory Council that worked directly with local communities to assess needs and wants and channel those back to the ASD. This focus on community engagement was a marked departure from other state-run districts, though some parents who participated charged that it lacked transparency, and that negative feedback had no impact on the ASD’s matching process. School principals faced a number of challenges, including high levels of teacher turnover, shortages of qualified teachers, and student mobility. In late 2015, the Shelby County School Board unanimously voted for a moratorium on any new schools being absorbed into the ASD and changes in state and local politics threatened to undermine its work moving forward.

Memphis, TN

In 2012, legislation aimed at improving the ASD’s operation also contained a provision that gave local districts the opportunity to create “innovation zones” that could also conduct turnarounds of “priority” schools. The Memphis-Shelby County School District was among the first districts to apply and crafted its “iZone” with a focus on infusing targeted schools with new leadership, teaching talent, and support. Principals in the iZone schools have enhanced authority over staffing compared to traditional district schools and the district provides targeted professional development to teachers through literacy and math coaches. Shelby County initially brought in seven schools in the first year. By the 2014–2015 school year, the zone contained 17 priority schools. Principals in the iZone have authority to hire teachers, and the district deliberately moved some of its best teachers into iZone schools. Schools continue to receive targeted support from the district and schools emphasized a similar set of improvement strategies including additional learning time for students. Results have been positive thus far, with the schools outpacing the gains of the ASD.

Appendix C

Evaluations of State-Initiated Turnaround

Center for Research on Education Outcomes. *Urban Charter School Study: Report on 41 Regions*, Stanford, CA: Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2015.

Dee, Thomas. *School Turnarounds: Evidence from the 2009 Stimulus*, Working Paper 17990, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2012.

Dougherty, Shaun M., and Jennie Weiner. "The Impact of Mandated Interventions in Low-Performing Schools Under ESEA Waivers." Presented at the annual fall research conference of the Association for Policy Analysis and Management, Miami, Florida, November 12–14, 2015.

Gill, Brian, Ron Zimmer, Jolley Christman, and Suzanne Blanc. *State Takeover, School Restructuring, Private Management, and Student Achievement in Philadelphia*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007.

Harris, Douglas N., and Matthew Larsen. *The Effects of the New Orleans Post-Katrina School Reforms on Student Academic Outcomes*, New Orleans, LA: Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, 2016.

Henry, Gary T., J. Edward Guthrie, and LaTricia W. Townsend. *Outcomes and Impacts of North Carolina's Initiative to Turn Around the Lowest Achieving Schools*, Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation – North Carolina, 2015.

LiCalsi, Christina, Maryna Citkowicz, Lawrence B. Friedman, and Megan Brown. *Evaluation of Massachusetts Office of District and School Turnaround Assistance to Commissioner's Districts and Schools - Impact of School Redesign Grants*, Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2015.

Learning Point Associates. *State Takeovers of Individual Schools*, Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates, 2005.

McQuillan, Patrick J., and Yves Salomon-Fernandez. "The Impact of State Intervention on 'Underperforming' Schools in Massachusetts: Implications for Policy and Practice," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 16, no. 18 (2008): 1–43.

Mintrop, Heinrich, and Tina Trujillo. "Corrective Action in Low-Performing Schools: Lesson for NCLB Implementation from First-Generation Accountability Systems," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 13, no. 48 (2005): 1–30.

Rice, John, Juan Carlos Bojorquez, Marycruz Diaz, Staci Wendt, and Jonathan Nakamoto. *School Improvement Grants: Outcomes After Three Years,* San Francisco, CA: WestEd, 2014.

Schueler, Beth E., Joshua Goodman, and David J. Deming. *Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts? Evidence from Lawrence Massachusetts*, Working Paper 21895, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016.

Wong, Kenneth, and Francis X. Shen. "Measuring the Effectiveness of City and State Takeover as a Reform Strategy," *Peabody Journal of Education* 78, no. 4 (2003): 89–119.

Zimmer, Ron, Gary T. Henry, and Adam Kho, "The Role of Governance and Management in School Turnaround Policies: The Case of Tennessee's Achievement School District and iZones." Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education Finance and Policy, Denver, Colorado, March 17–19, 2016.

Endnotes

1 Studies on mayoral control did not meet selection criteria for analysis in this report.

2 Kenneth K. Wong and Francis X. Shen, "Measuring the Effectiveness of City and State Takeover as a Reform Strategy," *Peabody Journal of Education* 78, no, 4 (2003): 89–119.

3 Craig Peck and Ulrich C. Reitzug, "School Turnaround Fever: The Paradoxes of a Historical Practice Promoted as a New Reform," *Urban Education* 49, no. 1 (2014): 8–38.

4 Daniel Player, Dallas Hambrick Hitt, and William Robinson, *District Readiness to Support School Turnaround: A Users' Guide to Inform the Work of State Education Agencies and Districts* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Center on School Turnaround, 2014).

5 Thomas B. Timar, "The Institutional Role of State Education Departments: A Historical Perspective," *American Journal of Education* 105, no. 3 (1997): 234.

6 Eric M. Patashnik, *Reforms at Risk: What Happens After Major Policy Changes Are Enacted* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

7 To receive a waiver from key requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act, states were required to develop a differentiated system of recognition, accountability, and support by identifying the lowest 5 percent of schools statewide as "priority" schools. Because state accountability systems vary, the way schools were identified varied from state to state. But all schools were required to be meet one of the following criteria: 1) be among the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools based on both achievement and lack of progress for all students, 2) be a Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate of less than 60 percent, or 3) be a currently served Tier I or Tier II SIG school.

8 This includes Paterson, Newark, Jersey City, and Camden.

9 Wong and Shen, "Measuring the Effectiveness of City and State Takeover as a Reform Strategy," 89–119

10 Kenneth K. Wong and Francis X. Shen, *Mayoral Governance and Student Achievement: How Mayor-Led Districts Are Improving School and Student Performance*, (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2013).

11 Paul T. Hill and Ashley E. Jochim, "Street-Savvy School Reform," *Education Next,* August 9, 2016.

12 Marion Orr documented the role of patronage in Baltimore's mayor-run school system: Marion Orr, *Black Social Capital: The Politics of School Reform in Baltimore, 1986–1998* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999). The state ended the city's century-long run with mayoral control in 1997 because of persistent managerial and performance challenges. For a review of the effectiveness of mayoral control as a reform strategy, see Ashley Jochim and Paul T. Hill, *Mayoral Intervention: Right for Seattle Schools?* (Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2008).

13 See Nelson Smith, *Redefining the School District in America*, (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2015) for a review of how Tennessee, Louisiana, and Michigan constructed their state-run districts. In 2016, Michigan discontinued its statewide district, the Education Achievement Authority, though operations will continue through 2017.

14 Mary M. Klute et al., *State Policies for Intervening in Chronically Low-Performing Schools: A 50-State Scan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, 2016).

15 Carole Perlman and Susan Hanes. "State Approaches to Turnaround in ESEA Flexibility Plans," in *The State Role in School Turnaround: Emerging Best Practices*, eds. L. M. Rhim and S. Redding (San Francisco, CA: WestEd, 2014): 127–142.

16 In the absence of experimental approaches, quasi-experimental methods represent the "gold standard" in policy analysis. This approach attempts to address threats to internal validity to identify the effects of a given program or policy intervention by comparing differences across two groups (a treatment and control), differences before and after an intervention, or both. It includes analysis techniques like difference-in-difference, interrupted time series, propensity-score matching, and regression discontinuity.

17 Harris and Larsen also examine the impact seven years after the takeover of New Orleans schools and report effect sizes significantly larger than those reported here. The three-year estimates are used here because they are comparable to those reported in the other evaluations reviewed.

18 Barbara Nye, Larry V. Hodges, and Spyros Konstantopoulos, "The Long-Term Effects of Small Classes: A Five-Year Follow-up of the Tennessee Class Size Experiment," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 21, no. 2 (1999): 127–142.

19 Anthony Bryk, et al., *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons From Chicago* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009). This seminal study of school improvement in Chicago found that five "essential elements" shape whether schools are able to improve student outcomes but also recognized that how schools pull these pieces together is in large part dependent on the relationships between the principal and teachers, teachers with each other, and parents with the school.

20 Public Impact, *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement* (Washington, DC: Center on Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

21 On the importance of district leadership, see Player, et al., *District Readiness to Support School Turnaround*. On turnaround principals, see Bryk, et al., *Organizing Schools for Improvement.*

22 Sarah Yatsko, et al.,*Tinkering Toward Transformation: A Look at Federal School Improvement Grant Implementation* (Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington Bothell, 2012).

23 Some researchers talk about authority in terms of autonomy, but autonomy is ultimately realized through authority to do something. Traditional site-based decision-making reforms, for example, emphasized providing schools with autonomy but failed to follow through on enabling schools to use their autonomy with decision-making authority. See Betty Malen, et al., (1990) "Unfulfilled Promises," *School Administrator* 47, no. 2 (1990): 30-59. Here, authority is defined in terms of the range of options available to the turnaround leader, who could be a principal, district administrator, or state administrator.

24 The Obama Administration's School Improvement Grant program required participating schools to advance one of these approaches, though all four turnaround models required replacement of the school principal.

25 Beth E. Schueler, Joshua Goodman, and David J. Deming, *Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts? Evidence from Lawrence, Massachusetts*, Working Paper No. 21895 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016).

26 See, for example, chartering efforts in Camden, Newark, and Philadelphia.

27 Replacement of existing staff was a key precept of the School Improvement Grant program. Many schools failed to secure effective replacements and staff "churn" may have impacted schools' improvement trajectories. See Jennifer A. Heissel and Helen Ladd, *School Turnaround in North Carolina: A Regression Discontinuity Analysis*, Working Paper 156 (Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis and Longitudinal Data in Education Research, 2016).

28 The New Teacher Project, *The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth About Our Quest for Teacher Professional Development* (Washington, DC: The New Teacher Project, 2015).

29 Patashnik, *Reforms at Risk.*

30 Bryk, et al., *Organizing Schools for Improvement.*

31 David Jesse, "Eastern Michigan pulls plug on Education Achievement Authority," *Detroit Free Press,* February 5, 2016.

32 Paul Hill and Kacey Guin, *What Others Can Learn From Oakland's School Reform Initiative,* Working Paper (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2007).

33 Here, the contrast between Camden and Newark is particularly illustrative, given similarities in student populations and city-state contexts. The state's takeover of Camden City School District was invited by the mayor of Camden, who historically appointed school board members, and supported by local Democratic party leader, George Norcross, a key powerbroker in local politics. The state appointed Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard and engaged in a 100-day "listening tour" which resulted in important changes to the district's strategic plan in response to community concerns. While the reforms that Camden and Newark undertook as part of their takeovers were quite similar, including charter schools, common enrollment, and cuts to central office spending, Camden has faced far less political turmoil.

34 Paul Hill and Ashley Jochim, *The Street-Level Politics of School Reform* (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, forthcoming).

35 Joshua L. Glazer and Cori Egan, *The Tennessee Achievement School District: Race, History, and the Dilemma of Public Engagement,* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development, 2016).

36 Paul Hill and Mary Beth Celio originally developed this concept in their book, Fixing Urban Schools. There, they identified "zones of wishful thinking" that underlie alternative school reform strategies. This zone "contains the actions and events that the reform initiative cannot cause but which the reform initiators agree must occur if schools and student learning are to improve." For simplicity, this report calls the zones of wishful thinking underlying approaches to state-initiated turnaround "liabilities" for they are things that are required for the turnaround to be successful but for which the reform proposal cannot address on its own. See Paul T. Hill and Mary Beth Celio, *Fixing Urban Schools* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998).

37 Player, Hambrick Hitt, Robinson, *District Readiness to Support School Turnaround.*

38 Heissel and Ladd, *School Turnaround in North Carolina.*

39 Player, Hambrick Hitt, Robinson, *District Readiness to Support School Turnaround.*

40 Ashley Jochim and Patrick Murphy, *The Capacity Challenge: What It Takes for State Education Agencies to Support School Improvement* (Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2013).

41 See Paul T. Hill and Ashley E. Jochim, "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick: Why Chiefs Should Do Both to Improve Schools and Districts," in *SEA of the Future: Leveraging ESSA for School Improvement*, Volume 6, eds. Betheny Gross and Ashley Jochim (Washington, DC: Building State Capacity and Productivity Center, U.S. Department of Education, forthcoming fall 2016).

42 Here, a critical question for states is whether external operators will be used to start new schools or if instead they are used to take over the management of existing schools. New schools tend to be more controversial, as traditional neighborhood boundaries may be disrupted, but have a stronger record of success than whole school turnarounds.

43 See, for example, the Apollo 20 program in Houston: Roland G. Fryer, Jr, *Injecting Successful Charter School Strategies into Traditional Public Schools: Evidence from Houston*, Working Paper 17494 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011).

44 Schueler, Goodman, and Deming, *Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts? Evidence from Lawrence Massachusetts*. Also see Beth Schueler, 2016, "A Third Way: The Politics of District Takeover and Turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts." Paper presented at the annual fall research conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, DC, November 3-5, 2016; and Denisa R. Superville, "State Takeover Gives Mass. District Fresh Start," *Education Week,* May 5, 2015.

About this Report

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About the Center on Reinventing Public Education

Through research and policy analysis, CRPE seeks ways to make public education more effective, especially for America's disadvantaged students. We help redesign governance, oversight, and dynamic education delivery systems to make it possible for great educators to do their best work with students and to create a wide range of high-quality public school options for families. Our work emphasizes evidence over posture and confronts hard truths. We search outside the traditional boundaries of public education to find pragmatic, equitable, and promising approaches to address the complex challenges facing public education. Our goal is to create new possibilities for the parents, educators, and public officials who strive to improve America's schools. CRPE is a nonpartisan, self-sustaining organization affiliated with the University of Washington Bothell. Our work is funded through philanthropy, federal grants, and contracts.

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