NASBE Study Group on Models of Success for Reconstitution

Karl Girton, Chair Pennsylvania
Dixie Allen Utah
Vicki Balentine Arizona
James Barker Pennsylvania
Delores Cook West Virginia
Nancy Danhof Michigan
Richard Farmer, Jr. Delaware
Carole Woods Harris Nebraska
Evie Hudak Colorado
Peggy Nielson Georgia
Gary Nixon Tennessee
Chris Robbins Vermont
Eleanor Saslaw Virginia
Jane Sonenshein Ohio
Diane Sumpter South Carolina
Bill Wagon Kansas
Christopher Ward Illinois
Charles Leopold South Carolina, Associate Member
Paul Manna Ex Officio Member

Presenters to the Study Group

January 2007
Morgan Brown, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education

Lauren Morando Rhim, Senior Consultant, Public Impact

Kathy Christie, Vice President for Knowledge Management, Education Commission of the States

Paul Manna, Assistant Professor, College of William and Mary

Ann Chafin, Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Student, Family and School Support, Maryland Department of Education

March 2007
Andrew Calkins, Executive Director, Mass Insight Education

Kathleen Smith, Director Office of School Improvement, Virginia Department of Education

Ardella Perry-Olser, Coordinator, Illinois Regional System of Support Providers

Carol Diedrichsen, Principal Education Consultant, Federal Grants and Programs, Illinois State Board of Education

Harvey Smith, Founder and Director of Interactive Illinois Report Card Website

Michael Terry, Senior Project Director, University of Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program

James Pughsley, Executive Director, Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education

LeAnn Buntrock, Director of Communications, Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education

Irving Hamer, Jr., Executive Vice President, The Millennium Group

June 2007
Randy Dehoff, Member, Colorado State Board of Education

Rosalind Taylor, Principal/School Turnaround Specialist, Woodville Elementary School

Charles Fitterer, Director of Field Services, WestEd

Harold Maready, Director, McKeel Academy of Technology

NASBE Staff

Carlas McCauley, Project Director
Michelle Dinkes, Project Associate
David Kysilko, Director of Publications
Amanda Karkhoff, Managing Editor

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## Contents

Introduction  
4

**Chapter 1. The Current Landscape**  
6  
A. The Law  
6  
B. The Data on Identified Schools  
9  
C. Restructuring Options under NCLB: What Does the Research Say?  
12

**Chapter 2. The Challenges of Restructuring**  
20  
A. Governance and Politics  
20  
B. Adequate Funding  
21  
C. Human Capital  
24

**Chapter 3. The State of State Restructuring**  
30  
A. California  
30  
B. Michigan  
32  
C. Maryland  
34  
D. Conclusion  
37

**Chapter 4. Recommendations**  
38  
Recommendations for the Federal Government  
39  
Recommendations for States  
40  
Recommendations for Local Systems and Schools  
42  
Policymaker’s Checklist for State Action  
43

**Glossary of Terms**  
45

**Endnotes**  
47
In the current education era defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), schools, districts, and policymakers face enormous challenges surrounding the growing number of schools and districts identified as “in need of improvement.” While few states were confronted with the consequences of corrective action and restructuring at the school level during NCLB’s initial years, those days are past. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s *National Assessment of Title I Interim Report*, 11,530 schools throughout the country were identified as in need of improvement during the 2004-05 school year, nearly 80 percent of which were Title I schools. Of the Title I schools identified, approximately one-fourth did not make AYP for four or more years. What’s more, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that 42 percent of the schools in corrective action or restructuring did not receive all required types of assistance through their school districts. Overall, schools identified as in need of improvement, which are often located in high-poverty, urban areas, affect a large number of students—it is estimated that within two years, schools in NCLB’s restructuring category alone will represent more than two million students. These are indeed challenging times.

Given the urgency of this situation, in January 2007 the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) commissioned a study group to evaluate states’ responses to this crisis, present its findings, and make recommendations to state boards and the education community. As the members of the Study Group discovered, there were few “magical” solutions to improving persistently low-performing schools. Indeed, the group found that many states, due to such factors as incomplete and inefficient data systems, have difficulty identifying the precise number of chronically low-performing schools—and that number has most likely been under-reported (again due to lack of accurate data, as well as the modest achievement goals most states set for the early stages of NCLB). The Study Group also found that few states have opted to be significantly involved in improvement efforts at the local level through such actions as taking over schools or state participation in developing and monitoring restructuring plans. But no matter what the precise numbers or courses of action taken so far, as more states deal with schools in restructuring, the pressure on policymakers and administrators to dramatically improve these schools will only grow.

Despite this looming crisis based on NCLB timetables, the members of the Study Group also wanted to step back and view the need for school improvement from the
broadest possible perspective. Accordingly, the Study Group wanted to emphasize the following points:

- First, large-scale accountability and school improvement efforts were initiated by most states prior to the development and passage of NCLB in 2001.

- Second, there are an unacceptably high number of schools that have been failing for many years. While the students in these mostly high-poverty schools need and deserve more, far too often they get less in terms of high-quality curricula and textbooks, high-quality teachers and administrators, and individualized support.

- Third, the importance of turning around these schools is not so much a matter of the law as it is fulfilling a moral obligation to the students and an economic imperative for communities, states, and the nation.

- Fourth, the Study Group appeals to states and state boards of education to take a more active role in school turnaround efforts. This is not a call for more authority. Rather, it is a request for states to supply more support, assistance, and guidance. It’s an appeal to states, policymakers, and school leaders to center their attention and resources on the ever-growing number of schools and districts that are entering the corrective action/restructuring phases and beyond.

- Finally, the members of NASBE’s Study Group extend their appeal to all politicians, business and civic leaders, and citizens in every community to be involved. Without such broad-based participation, even the best efforts by school systems are likely to be incomplete and short-lived.
Chapter 1. The Current Landscape

Today, as a result of state accountability systems and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), education systems are rife with schools that need help. They need help designing and implementing school improvement plans. They need help getting more highly qualified teachers. They need help finding the best leaders who know how to turn around school cultures to make them into true learning communities. Sometimes, they need help in starting over from scratch. This is an enormous undertaking that is severely taxing the capacity of school districts, and most states are still struggling to find their proper role in the effort.

We have already noted the Study Group’s assertion of the moral and economic imperatives for fixing low-performing schools. But for better or worse, it is the law—NCLB—that is the immediate driving force behind the need for action. Accordingly, this chapter begins with a presentation of the basic accountability measures under NCLB, including year-by-year sanctions for schools that repeatedly fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), state and district responsibilities, and options under school reconstitution. We then provide the best available data on the number of under-performing schools that exist across the country—and that truly dominate the landscape in some areas—and why they have failed. Finally, this chapter reviews what is currently known about the restructuring options that are being used by states and districts, including how successful such efforts tend to be in improving student performance.

A. The Law

Under NCLB, schools and districts are recognized as low performing when they fall short of meeting adequate yearly progress or AYP. The most challenging requirement of the law is that schools and districts must make AYP in reading and math not only for the school populations as a whole, but for each of a number of student subgroups, including low-income students, limited English proficient students, students with disabilities, and students in major racial/ethnic and economic subgroups. The basic premise for AYP is that 100 percent of a school’s students will reach proficiency in reading and math on state tests by 2014. Accordingly, each year a higher and higher percentage of students need
Comparison of NCLB Requirements for Identified Schools and Districts
(Schools and districts have similar NCLB requirements. However, there are some variations.)

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<th>School Year after Being Identified</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Districts</th>
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| 1st Year                          | • Identified as in need of improvement  
• Develop improvement plan that addresses reasons for not making AYP  
• Offer students public school choices | • Identified as in need of improvement  
• Develop improvement plan that addresses reasons for not making AYP  
• Can no longer be a direct provider of supplemental education services |
| 2nd Year                          | • Implement School improvement plan  
• Continue to offer public school choices  
• Offer students supplemental education  
• By end of school year, districts must implement one of the corrective action approaches | • Implement district improvement plan  
• By end of school year, state must implement corrective action, which may include deferring program funds, instituting new curriculum, replacing district personnel, etc. |
| 3rd Year                          | • Continue to offer choice and supplemental education services  
• Implement corrective action | • Implement corrective action |
| 4th Year                          | • Enter restructuring  
• Continue to offer choices and supplemental educational services  
• District must develop and implement a two year plan that can include any of the restructuring options | • Implement corrective action |
| 5th Year                          | • Implement school restructuring  
• Public school choices and supplemental education services must continue | • Implement corrective action |

Source: Center on Education Policy, Identifying School Districts for Improvement and Corrective Action Under the No Child Left Behind Act, March 2005.

to reach proficiency (the specific yearly objectives have been set individually by states) in order for all students to achieve proficiency by 2014.

While some states are using equal growth increments, more than 20 states use an accelerating curve, with more growth required at the end of the time period than at the beginning. In practical terms, this means that it will be even more difficult for schools and districts in these states to achieve AYP the closer we get to 2014. The accelerating curve, along with the reality that it is simply more difficult for many schools to achieve the higher rates of proficiency, explains why the number of schools currently failing to make AYP (with even more cropping up on the landscape in the near future) has reached crisis proportions for most states.
What happens when schools fail to make AYP? The chart on page 7 shows the progressively severe sanctions schools (and districts) face if they fail to make AYP over successive years. Briefly, schools are designated as being in need of improvement once they fail to make AYP for two consecutive years. Such schools need to offer students public school choices and develop improvement plans. After schools fail to make AYP for three or four consecutive years, they are identified as “chronically” low performing and must take corrective actions, as well as offer students supplemental educational services. After five or more years of missing AYP, schools enter the “restructuring” phase. In restructuring, according to the U.S. Department of Education’s nonregulatory guidance, the district “undertakes a major reorganization of a school, making fundamental reforms, such as significant changes in the school’s staffing and governance. The purpose of restructuring is to improve student academic achievement and enable the school to make AYP as defined in the state’s accountability system.”

Restructuring under NCLB is also specified as a set number of possible actions that can be taken to turn around a school. This list (detailed above) is important to states and districts, as it sets the parameters for the reform plans, which can range from reopening the school as a charter to complete state takeover to “any other major restructuring of the school’s governance.” As will be seen later, while most of the options would seemingly call for a truly monumental overhaul, it is the “other” option that is most frequently used.

**State vs. District Roles**

Under NCLB, states are required to take a central role in most of the law’s accountability measures, including developing curriculum standards and matching assessments, defining performance goals for students and schools, and developing the alternative procedures and tests for assessing students with disabilities. But when it comes to defining which entity is responsible for schools that have entered the corrective action or restructuring phase, the language of the federal law places the obligation of turning around these schools on the local education agency (LEA), which is typically the school district. Still, NCLB notes that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that districts are effectively implementing school improvement strategies and procedures—and meeting the requirements of the law—rests with states. And of course, states have the fundamental constitutional responsibility for ensuring that an effective, uniform, or adequate education system exists within their borders.
Yet NCLB does not specify exactly how states are to fulfill this mission. Thus, despite having the “ultimate” responsibility, reports indicate that few states have chosen notable involvement in developing and monitoring restructuring plans. In fact, research shows that most states do not collect, review, or provide much oversight of district restructuring efforts. The level of state participation has varied for numerous reasons. First, some states do not feel a sense of urgency to turn around struggling schools. Second, in some instances the political culture and climate creates a hindrance, which is often attributed to a strong tradition of local control. Finally, many states desire to have a more significant role in supporting school turn around efforts, but lack the capacity and the resources to do so.

While more information and recommendations regarding the state role in school restructuring is provided later in this report, it bears repeating that NASBE’s Study Group firmly believed that state policymakers and education leaders must take a central role in the dialogue, planning, and policies that support efforts by those at the local level to turn around the nation’s lowest-performing schools.

B. The Data

Which Schools and Districts Are We Talking About?

As cited earlier, in 2004-2005, data from the National Assessment of Title I Interim Report showed that 11,530 schools had been placed in one of the three improvement categories under NCLB. Overall, 25 percent of schools did not make AYP, and preliminary data for 2006 showed that the percentage of schools not making AYP had risen to nearly 30 percent. In several states, more than half of all schools rated under NCLB failed to make AYP. The numbers also reveal significant trends in the schools and districts undergoing restructuring: most are traditionally disadvantaged, large, high-poverty, high-minority, urban schools. The study found that district size mattered most in the likelihood of a
district being identified: one-third of large districts were identified in 2004-05 compared to 17 percent of medium districts and five percent of small districts. Nationwide, 54 percent of schools in various stages of improvement were located in urban districts, even though only 27 percent of Title I schools are located in urban districts. In addition, almost two-thirds of the 1,155 corrective action and 1,635 restructuring schools were also in urban districts. Five states—California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania—collectively had over 60 percent of these schools.

While middle schools accounted for a greater percentage of identified schools nationwide in 2004-05, in absolute numbers more elementary schools, which account for a majority of all schools, were in need of improvement. According to the Title I Interim Report, in 2004-05, more than half of schools in restructuring were elementary schools.

**In What Ways Are Schools and Districts Missing AYP?**

Nationwide, 13 percent of schools were identified as in need of improvement in 2004-2005, and while all these schools reached that point by missing AYP, how and why they missed AYP is not as clear cut. According to data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, in 2003-04 schools most commonly missed AYP for the achievement of all students and/or multiple subgroups. The graph above breaks down the reasons schools missed AYP.
It is not the intent of this report to critique the effectiveness or fairness of NCLB provisions. Certainly, many critics argue that it is unfair to hold an entire school accountable for the failure of one subgroup, a category that makes up 23 percent of schools that miss AYP. For the purposes of this report, however, the Study Group notes that the majority of schools did not make AYP either because they missed AYP for the “All Students” group or for a combination of reasons. These are schools that are likely, by any measure, to need significant improvement or restructuring.

The data also show that—fair or not—schools that were held accountable for more subgroups were less likely to make AYP. Among schools for which AYP was calculated for six or more subgroups, 39 percent did not make AYP, compared with 10 percent of schools for which AYP was calculated based on only one subgroup. In high-poverty schools that had six or more subgroups, 66 percent missed AYP, compared with 35 percent of low-poverty schools that had six or more subgroups, another indicator of the increased challenge facing urban districts.11

Finally, an overview of the data landscape would not be complete without mentioning state-by-state comparisons. No matter which data set is used, even casual observers of state-by-state numbers and percentages of schools missing AYP would likely remark on the significant differences seen across the states. Sometimes adjacent states with similar demographics and similar scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have widely divergent percentages of schools identified as in need of improvement—in some cases, double or more the percentage.

There are a number of reasons for these differences. As explained earlier, states set their own targets for bringing all students to proficiency by 2014. States with steeper curves
as they get closer to that date may see fewer schools missing AYP in the early years, but relatively more later on. Some states with more robust data systems are more efficient than others at identifying schools in need of improvement. States that have set lower thresholds for the number of students that must be in a school’s subgroup before it is counted are likely to have more schools missing AYP. And some states simply have higher performance standards, meaning it is harder for students to reach proficiency, making it more likely that schools will miss AYP.

Such differences would once more seem to provide fuel to those who believe NCLB is not fair, in this case because it allows too much room for states to game the system. But again, the Study Group was clear that such arguments are beside the point when it comes to the overall need for all states to gear up their involvement in school improvement.

C. Restructuring Options under NCLB: What Does the Research Say?

This section presents the data on which strategies are being used under NCLB’s restructuring options and—critically for policymakers and administrators who are charged with deciding which options to use with specific schools—reviews the research on each of the options to find the lessons learned from past implementation.

As detailed in the textbox on page 8, the restructuring provisions of NCLB outline five options that districts can select after a school fails to make AYP for five years: reopen as a charter, replace all or most of the staff, contract with an outside entity, initiate state takeover, and the “other” category. The Center on Education Policy (CEP) has conducted a yearly review of NCLB implementation, and CEP’s most recent evaluation showed that most often, districts are selecting “other” when going about the difficult work of turning around chronically low-performing schools that had reached the restructuring phase.12 Although NCLB calls for “other” to be a comprehensive reform initiative with “substantial promise of enabling a school to make adequately yearly progress,” many districts are actually implementing smaller changes within that category. Some observers believe that, too often, the “other” option has become a loophole for not making comprehensive and significant changes to a school’s structure and governance. The graph opposite shows that replacing ineffective staff and “other” were the options most often selected by schools—which also happen to be the least comprehensive restructuring options available for schools.

However, CEP notes that the state context can matter a great deal when it comes to defining what “other” might mean. For example, in California (where 89 percent of districts use the “other” category), the state takes a hands-off approach, allowing the full range of potential restructuring activities. Maryland has now limited the “other” activities to selected, specific strategies, such as using a turnaround specialist. Michigan, which elaborates on 18 acceptable strategies, has actively pushed a number of school systems to use the turnaround specialist option, which is being used by 72 percent of the state’s districts.

1. Reopen as a Charter

Traditional public schools that close down and reopen as a charter under NCLB restructuring differ dramatically from the more numerous charter schools that started from
scratch. The restructured schools are referred to as conversion charters or “start fresh” charters. When a state or district closes a low-performing school and reopens it under a charter, the school receives a “clean slate,” meaning the NCLB sanctioning timetable is set back to year zero.

The data show that the chartering option has only been selected in a few states and districts. One study of the implementation of restructuring options under NCLB found that few chose the chartering option in part because the timetable set out in the law did not align with the charter application process. Research has shown that districts that close schools in June and reopen them under new management in August struggle with poor results. It is critical that if the chartering option is selected, then school administrators and personnel must be given ample time to set systems in place that will create conditions for success.

As NCLB is still relatively young, few schools have converted to charters due to restructuring sanctioning. Those that have done so converted to charter status very recently, therefore there is no multi-year data currently available for NCLB conversion charter schools. However, data from California, the state with the largest proportion of conversion charter schools (dating from well before NCLB), show that achievement levels at conversion schools are similar to both startup charters and conventional public schools.

**Key Lessons about Chartering:**

- Conversion charters differ significantly from start-up charters, but in some instances have been found to have comparable achievement results.
Research shows that closing a school in June and reopening in September often brings poor results. Chartering should not be a hasty process—it takes time to create the conditions and environment necessary for success.

2. Replace All or Most of the Staff

The second restructuring option under NCLB, replacing all or most of the staff (including the principal) who are relevant to the school’s failure is not a new concept. Previously referred to as school reconstitution, many early reform efforts centered on the belief that school staff was at the core of the academic and cultural problems plaguing chronically low-performing schools. The theory behind reconstitution is simple: replace the staff, thus ridding the school of the causes for failure, and student achievement will improve. While school reconstitutions prior to NCLB typically focused on replacing an entire staff, NCLB specifically targets staff relevant to the school’s low performance.

Research supports the argument that teachers matter—few would deny the positive effects of quality teachers. Researchers have concluded, for example, that teacher effectiveness is “the single biggest factor influencing gains in achievement,” and was more significant than race, poverty, or parent’s education. The evidence also supports the positive impact of quality leadership on school performance. In fact, researchers at the University of Minnesota found that “leadership was second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.” They continue, “There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of intervention by talented leaders…While other factors within the school also contribute to such turnarounds, leadership is the catalyst.”

Surprisingly, despite the plethora of data on teacher and leader effects, there are few large-scale studies that measure the impact of replacing all staff in a school, including the principal, on student achievement. There are two major studies, however, that we can look to in order to better understand the potential impacts of this restructuring option. First, researchers at the University of Maryland found that while reconstitution in the district they studied did result in dramatic staff changes, the replacement teachers were often new recruits, many of whom were first-year teachers and not yet certified. The authors noted that “reconstitution may precipitate staffing changes that run counter to the premises and promises of this reform, at least when introduced in a context of chronic teacher shortages and in the absence of incentives that might attract and retain new and veteran teachers in challenging schools.” Anecdotal evidence from case interviews suggests that many veteran, reputedly effective, teachers felt so personally insulted by the reform initiative, which required all staff to resign and reapply, that they chose to transfer to another school. Due to the large proportion of new staff, the researchers found that many schools entered “survival mode” and reverted to pre-reform behaviors, resulting in marginal adjustment as opposed to comprehensive redesign. In terms of academic achievement, there were erratic patterns across the reconstituted schools in the district, leading the authors to conclude that any perceived gains in student achievement cannot be directly attributed to reconstitution.

Another study tracked schools in San Francisco that were reconstituted beginning in the late 1980s in response to a court order to improve minority achievement. Similar to the
results of the University of Maryland study, data from San Francisco revealed that reconstituted schools were staffed by new, young, inexperienced teachers, many of whom held waivers. In addition, the data showed that teachers who worked in schools identified for reconstitution were demoralized and felt personally blamed by the district. The San Francisco experience does offer some new insights into the theory of reconstitution. The reconstitution reform began with six schools, and only after these schools showed some immediate success was the strategy implemented at eight additional schools. The phase two schools, however, were forced to implement the strategy more rapidly and received fewer resources to help with the transition. The phase two schools saw mixed results and, ultimately, the district decided to implement less drastic reforms.

**Key Lessons about Replacing Staff:**

- Many low-performing districts struggle with finding qualified teachers; unless incentives are put in place to attract quality, experienced teachers to low-performing schools, staff replacement will result in an influx of new, inexperienced teachers and is counterintuitive to the goals of the reform.

- It is critical that staff replacement be coupled with other forms of district support and that schools be given ample time to select new staff and create a school culture that supports quality instruction.

### 3. Contract with an Outside Entity

Contracting with an external education management organization (EMO) is the third option for districts with schools in the restructuring phase. Contracting is an agreement between a public school district and an outside organization, either a private for-profit or a nonprofit group, to deliver comprehensive educational and management services to a failing school. Contracting for non-educational services such as transportation or cafeteria management is a common practice across the country. What differs with the NCLB restructuring option is that the outside entity is responsible for all school functions, including, most notably, instructional practice.

There are few rigorous, non-biased studies of the effects of outside management on school performance. Most research on the issue is conducted by the management organizations themselves or opponents of EMOS—both groups tend to put their particular spin on the issue, making their conclusions irrelevant to policymakers weighing the options for schools undergoing restructuring. There are, however, two major studies that provide some insights on the validity of this option in improving the achievement of students in low-performing schools.

RAND Education conducted a comprehensive, multiyear evaluation of the performance of schools nationwide managed by Edison Schools, Inc, the largest private education management company in the United States. RAND’s analysis is the most comprehensive independent assessment of Edison schools ever conducted. Through 2004-05, 60 percent of the schools operated by Edison were conventional public schools that were converted to Edison’s management, typically by local school districts. The rest were start-up public charter schools. The evaluation had several interesting conclusions, most notably
that Edison conversion schools failed initially, but eventually caught up. Achievement in these schools lagged behind matched comparison schools during the first three years of Edison management, but by year 5, cumulative test score gains were similar. Another finding was the significant variation in achievement among individual Edison schools. The research showed that Edison schools that faced fewer constraints on their ability to implement the Edison design demonstrated greater achievement gains than other Edison schools. In particular, schools that implemented Edison’s site-based professional development program saw greater gains. Policymakers can glean from these conclusions the importance of allowing EMOs to act freely in implementing their model to the fullest extent possible.

The other study, published by the GAO in 2003, compared achievement results for students attending privately managed and traditional schools in six cities. The GAO’s research found inconsistent impacts, more evidence that no one solution works best for all schools and that policymakers must understand the importance of considering local factors in making decisions regarding the best restructuring option. The authors concluded, “Our analyses of scores on state reading and mathematics tests in selected grades did not show a consistent pattern of superior student performance between schools managed by private companies and demographically similar traditional public schools in six cities.”

**Key Lessons about Contracting:**

- Districts need to allow EMOs the ability to fully implement their model if they are to achieve the most significant gains in student achievement.

- The inconsistent impacts of private management mean it is critical that policymakers look at a provider’s track record working in schools similar to their own before selecting this option.

### 4. State Takeover

State takeover of individual schools is arguably the most controversial of the restructuring options. As envisioned by NCLB, individual districts would invite the state to take over a persistently low-performing school. The law does not address what states should do post-takeover, but it is likely that they would select one of the other NCLB restructuring options and oversee the management of the process. Therefore, some of the research on state takeovers is included in other sections of this chapter, specifically, contracting and chartering.

The idea of state takeover as a reform strategy is a relatively rarely used option. Researchers have identified three categories of school takeovers: academic, financial, and managerial. Most studies suggest that takeovers are more successful in financial and management aspects than in improving student achievement. This is not surprising given the challenges of turning around academically low-performing schools. Two researchers who studied the patterns of takeovers noted a higher incidence of state takeover in non-election years, which they attribute to the “electoral consequences of removing local control of schools.”

21

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According to data collected by Education Commission of the States, 29 states have the right to take over districts and 23 have policies that enable them to take over individual schools. There are no examples to date of voluntary (“friendly”) takeovers of individual schools as envisioned by NCLB; therefore, we have to look at analogous situations such as hostile takeovers of schools and districts in order to evaluate the validity of this option for turning around chronically low-performing schools. Specifically, we will look at research on mayoral takeovers in Boston and Chicago, a study evaluating state takeovers of districts over the last fifteen years, and lastly we will return to the RAND evaluation of the Philadelphia takeover.

Mayoral takeovers have become more common in recent years and essentially replace one form of local control with another. A study of the mayoral takeovers in Boston and Chicago showed they were linked to increases in student achievement at the elementary grades, but were less effective in upper grades. This analysis is very much in line with other research that suggests it is a greater challenge to improve high schools. The researchers also postulate that one reason mayoral takeovers may be more successful than state takeovers is because mayors are held accountable to voters in a more direct way.

Research on state takeovers of districts suggests that there is no uniform application across states and that there is little consistency in results. However, researchers from Vanderbilt and Harvard Universities did find evidence of a trend that state takeovers resulted in changes in staff allocation. Specifically, there was a shift in staffing patterns from administrative purposes toward teaching and learning. The authors note that this trend was consistent with their hypothesis that state officials would strategically align fiscal resources with the stated goals of the state education agency, i.e., improving academic achievement.

When the state took over the Philadelphia school district in 2002, the appointed School Reform Commission (SRC) adopted a diverse model that turned over the management of 45 schools to private organizations, provided additional financial and technical assistance to 21 schools (“restructured schools”), and provided 16 schools with additional per pupil funding, but offered no additional support. Overall, the Philadelphia takeover increased citywide achievement in elementary and middle schools. The authors conclude that “the larger implications of the findings of this study for the most aggressive sanctions of NCLB are less clear. With respect to state takeover, results are ambiguous: subsequent to the state’s takeover of the district, proficiency percentages increased districtwide, but the total increase over four years was not substantially greater than the increase of other low-achieving schools in the state, in most cases.” Although the Philadelphia takeover has improved the knowledge base about state takeovers, there is still much research needed before making broad conclusions about the efficacy of this option.

“[O]ver a third of schools that fully implemented a corrective action or restructuring option made AYP, as opposed to 16 percent of schools that had mostly or partially implemented improvement activities.”

Government Accountability Office
The reason most often cited as an argument against takeover is the lack of capacity, both in terms of financial constraints and human resources, at the state level. A recent report published by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) substantiated these claims (see chart below). Although the survey conducted by CEP of education officials in all 50 states and the District of Columbia focused on all years of NCLB sanctions, from identifying schools in need of improvement to restructuring, the results have interesting implications for assessing the potential for improving student achievement via state takeovers of schools. Insufficient numbers of staff was cited as the greatest challenge to state education agencies’ (SEAs) capacity to implement NCLB.

**Key Lessons about State Takeovers:**

- State takeovers have been successful in reallocating staff to focus on the core work of schools (i.e., improving student learning) by investing more human capital in teaching and learning as opposed to administrative functions.

- State capacity, both in terms of financial and human resources, is the single biggest barrier to use of state takeover as a restructuring option.

**E. “Other”**

NCLB is not the first federal legislation that aimed to improve the nation’s lowest performing schools. The Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA), passed in 1994, was the first to identify schools “in need of improvement” and, if they continued to perform poorly, placed them in corrective action. When NCLB came to fruition, it differed from this earlier leg-

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<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Minimally</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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<td>Insufficient numbers of staff</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>Inadequate federal funds</td>
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<td>Inadequate state funds</td>
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<td>Inability to attract and retain qualified staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient technological capacity</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
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Source: Center on Education Policy

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Number of States Reporting Various Factors as Challenges to Their Capacity to Provide Technical Assistance to Districts with Schools in Improvement, Corrective Action or Restructuring
islation by adding an additional layer of accountability—school restructuring. The intent was to stop incremental changes at the margins and pressure low-performing schools to take dramatic action to improve student achievement for all students. The authors of the legislation offered schools significant choices, as evidenced by the four options for restructuring outlined above. The intent behind the options was to meet the differing needs of low-performing schools, allowing them to match solutions to the unique needs of their school and community. The law offers even more choice with the addition of a fifth option for schools in this stage of improvement—an amorphous “other.” In preparing a restructuring plan, the law allows the district to choose “any other major restructuring of the school’s governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms...to improve academic achievement in the school and that has substantial promise of enabling the school to make adequate yearly progress.”

The U.S. Department of Education found that states needed more guidance in determining what qualified as “major restructuring of school governance” and published some non-regulatory guidelines that offered examples of possible options. They include, among others:

- Changing the governance structure of the school in a significant manner that either diminishes school-based management and decisionmaking or increases control, monitoring, and oversight of the school’s operations and educational program by the LEA;
- Closing the school and reopening it as a focus or theme school with new staff or staff skilled in the focus area (e.g., math and science, dual language, communication arts);
- Reconstituting the school into smaller autonomous learning communities (e.g., school-within-a-school model, learning academies, etc.); and
- Expanding or narrowing the grades served.

The non-regulatory guidance goes on to note that whatever “alternative governance” option a local education agency selects, it “must be substantial enough to transform and sustain change.” Analyses by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the Center for Education Policy reveal that “other” is overwhelmingly the most selected restructuring option. Early results show that “other” is often seen as the easy way out. Even more troubling, the “alternative governance” models selected by states are far less aggressive and comprehensive than the law calls for and often mirror corrective action sanctions. Most notably, schools are implementing whole-school reform models or new curriculums. Because “other” is so ill-defined, it is impossible to present relevant research as to its potential effectiveness in turning around low-performing schools.

**Key Lessons about “Other”:**

- “Other” is overwhelmingly the most selected restructuring option under NCLB.
- Often the changes made under the guise of “alternative governance” mirror the options available to schools in the earlier stages of NCLB, specifically corrective action, and are incremental and nonintrusive in their approach.
Chapter 2. The Challenges of Restructuring

The education community faces daunting challenges in overcoming the barriers that hinder total support and cohesive efforts at turning around schools. Before examining some of these challenges to states in detail, one overarching point should be made. With so many schools now being identified as in need of improvement, and with many more likely to be identified in the future, it is clear that neither states nor districts can successfully go it alone. The Study Group held it to be essential that education officials at the state and local levels join forces to overcome the impediments and pledge to work together to resolve the crisis of turning around the nation’s low-performing schools.

A. Governance and Politics

As we have seen, NCLB gives states the responsibility of providing adequate staffing and funding for schools identified as in need for improvement. States are held accountable for developing a statewide system that provides concentrated and sustained support in assisting schools in implementing improvement strategies. Yet local districts are the initial “respondents,” and they generally remain the primary forces in restructuring efforts. Thus, the nexus between state and district responsibility can be unclear, and those states where “local control” concerns emerge may experience even more uncertainties around the clarity of responsibility. Complicating the picture is that even aside from local control questions, school districts have been less than enthusiastic about requesting state intervention, particularly in urban districts where the highest percentage of schools in need of improvement exist. Moreover, all too often local education officials have not sought help from outside entities in pursuing these reform efforts. In fact, many districts criticize the accountability requirements and the state’s deficiency in providing adequate financial resources to help schools improve.

For their part, as previously mentioned, very few states have used the state takeover option. Of the 23 states that possess the legal right to take over individual schools, only five (Alabama, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island) have chosen to exercise the right. As the research has shown, there are no examples of voluntary state takeovers of individual schools as envisioned under the federal law, and some states have taken the option of state takeover completely off the table.
Overall, the governance subject presents a difficult hurdle for leaders at all levels seeking to restructure. Under the federal law, restructuring requires districts and/or states to make changes in governance. Altering the governance of an organization is not an easy task and can easily cause many in the political arena, both locally and statewide, to take sides. At the local level, districts have sometimes attempted to require all staff to reapply for jobs or opted to turn struggling schools into charters, both of which have conflicted with existing union contracts. These attempts have led to intense political pressure and legal battles, making many districts cautious about choosing reform strategies that include replacing teachers or converting to a charter status or private management.

Political problems at the state level can easily be seen in the example of the Maryland State Board of Education. The Board, on the recommendation of State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, voted to take over four failing high schools in Baltimore and place seven other city schools under the control of contractors—the first such takeover action under NCLB. However, the State Board’s action quickly became mired in electoral politics, as Baltimore Mayor Martin O’Malley was running against the current governor, Robert Erhlich, and the action was perceived by some, particularly in Baltimore, as a slap at the mayor. The State Board’s takeover was overridden by the legislature, that bill was vetoed by the Governor, and the veto in turn was quickly overridden by legislators.

Both sides made appeals in the name of the students. A Baltimore legislator said that while no one in the city was happy with achievement levels at the school, it was important to let the city fix the problem. “We are by no means satisfied by where we are,” Mayor O’Malley said, “but we are glad we’re not going to have the skids pulled out from under our kids.”

In an interview with Education Week, Superintendent Grasmick said that “One should be concerned about the circumstances of the students. When we look at the reforms, we look at a world that’s increasingly competitive. Thousands of students that have not received a high school diploma in the state should be alarmed” if the state is not permitted to implement its reforms.32

Despite (or because of) such tensions as were manifested in the Maryland case, the Study Group found there is a critical need for close cooperation between local and state education officials and staff. Without overcoming the political challenges that may be present, support for school improvement efforts will continue to vary widely by district and state—and much needed assistance and reforms could be seriously delayed. The losers in such squabbles will inevitably be the students.

**B. Adequate Funding**

Funding is a significant challenge for school improvement efforts. Much of the financial support for school improvement derives directly from Title I Part A funds that are allocated to the state. States are now required to direct four percent of this money toward a school improvement fund (SIF). Some states have declared that the limitations on funding have left them unable to address school improvement needs. Indeed, a recent study conducted by the Center for Education Policy found that several states had no funds at
State Capacity and NCLB

NCLB lays out many requirements for states, but perhaps the most challenging is the requirement that state departments of education support and provide technical assistance to low-performing schools. NCLB requires states to “establish a statewide system of intensive and sustained support and improvement for local educational agencies and schools [that have been identified as in need of improvement].”

Two Harvard researchers, Gail Sunderman and Gary Orfield, evaluated how states are meeting the law’s requirements. They argue that the state role in providing direct support to help schools and districts improve has not been a traditional state function. They write, “State agencies developed the expertise and capacity to funnel state and federal funds to local districts and to propagate regulations needed to monitor education. Requiring states to intervene and force change in schools and districts requires a very different sort of capacity.” They identified two types of capacity critical for successful implementation on NCLB: 1) human and financial resources available state and local agencies; and 2) organizational capacity, both the systems necessary to meet the data management and testing requirements and the networking between state and local authorities supporting schools.

The research found that state administrators did indeed implement the data collection, testing, and supplemental services aspects of the law. Regarding the more ambitious goals of providing intense support and technical assistance, however, states have failed to meet the challenge. The researchers identified three types of factors that potentially constrain state activities in response to NCLB:

- **Structural**: the structure of our multi-level educational governance system limits the influence of state actors on schools and districts.

- **Functional**: state agencies’ primary responsibilities are (or have traditionally been) monitoring for compliance, issuing regulations and guidelines, and serving as a conduit for the distribution of state and federal funds.

- **Political**: the pressure to undertake certain activities rather than others coupled with pressure from the federal government to comply with its requirements.

NCLB has offered few financial resources to states to provide this intense support. For the majority of the time that NCLB has been law, the only federal funding available to state departments of education was a four percent set-aside of Title I funds. Prior to the 2005-2006 school year, this reservation was only two percent. Only a small portion of this funding (five percent) could be retained by the state for department activities and personnel. This funding did not represent additional money, but rather a reallocation of Title I funds.
To put this set-aside in perspective, the table below quantifies the amount of funding available in a few selected states for district and state school improvement activities.

### Amount of Title I Budget Allocated for School Improvement, FY 2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>4% for School Improvement</th>
<th>95% of 4% for Districts</th>
<th>5% of 4% for State</th>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>$71,061,718</td>
<td>$67,508,632</td>
<td>$3,553,086</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>7,492,518</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>46,613,696</td>
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<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>5,604,091</td>
<td>5,323,886</td>
<td>280,205</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>7,095,714</td>
<td>6,740,928</td>
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* based on ESEA Title I Grants to Local LEAs for FY2005

In terms of school improvement funding at the school level, if each school that was identified received an equal portion of the NCLB funding (which is unlikely, since the grants go first to the district, which usually takes a portion for administrative costs), the allocation per school would typically be in the $40,000 to $60,000 range, with a high of $130,884 in Michigan to a low of $32,565 per school in South Carolina.

When first passed, NCLB authorized a separate program for school improvement, but funds were not appropriated for the first several years of implementation. In 2007, $125 million was finally earmarked for Title I School Improvement Grants. Upon releasing the budget, the Department of Education commented that funding the school improvement grants recognizes “that the long-term success of No Child Left Behind requires a strong state role in LEA and school improvement.” States have flexibility in using the funds and are permitted to retain up to 50 percent of their allocations for state-level activities. Draft proposals for the reauthorization of NCLB from both the House and Senate request $500 million for the school improvement grants, further recognition of the tremendous role states play in helping meet the challenge of turning around low-performing schools.
all set aside for school improvement and many other states reported using state funds to address some of the goals of NCLB, but the states’ funds were seen as uncertain, particularly in states with declining revenue.34

Of the state money placed in the school improvement funds, the vast majority must go directly to schools (however, states can use a small portion to finance additional state-wide support, such as school support teams). The federal law provides some guidance to states in carrying out financing efforts, but states have generally adopted a wide range of approaches to financing schools in need of improvement. For instance, a number of states have chosen to provide schools with a flat per school allocation, while some states have adopted a formula for determining the amount of school improvement funds based on the length of time a school has been in improvement status. Still other states have chosen to use school improvement money only for schools that are in the corrective action and/or restructuring phases.

Several problems have emerged with the school improvement funds (beyond the ongoing claims that the money has been insufficient from the start). First is the reality that the allocation of Title I funds to states is tied to the number of low-income students in a state and is not linked to the number of schools in improvement status. This means that it may be possible for states to have a greater than average number of schools in need of improvement and yet have less money to assist those schools.35

Another problem has surfaced in part because Title I funding has been relatively flat in recent years and in part because NCLB has a “hold harmless” provision for districts receiving Title I funding. This provision means that no district can receive less money under Title I than it did the previous year if this is caused by the four percent school improvement set aside. A CEP report found that because of the need to deliver Title I funds to districts first, and only then reserve the school improvement money, 29 states won’t be able to set aside the full four percent for school improvement, including three states that won’t be able to set aside any money at all.36

Inadequate funding at both the district and state levels could seriously derail wide-scale school reform efforts. In its recent report, CEP makes several recommendations regarding federal funds for school improvement (see box opposite).

C. Human Capital

Another obstacle to creating a system that supports significant school improvement is the lack of qualified leaders. It is not enough to promote organizational restructuring; someone must be in place to implement the transformation. Research has shown that leadership is vital for the success of school turnaround efforts. School leaders are tasked with managing the staff and carrying out the procedures to ensure that conditions are in place to facilitate and enhance school improvement efforts. Currently, there is a shortage of experienced leaders who possess the expertise to aid schools and districts in their school improvement endeavors. Many efforts are being made to prepare more individuals with the skills and the tools to manage this massive undertaking. One of these, the Virginia Turnaround Specialist program, is profiled on page 26.
Recommendations Federal Funding for School Improvement
(from the Center for Education Policy)37

- **Provide funding for assistance to schools in improvement that is separate from the four percent set-aside.** CEP notes that as this separate improvement fund grew, the set-aside funding could be reduced. But the upshot would be funding for school improvement that is more stable.

- **Encourage a triage approach to assistance to schools in improvement.** Because schools can miss AYP for so many different reasons and be at different stages of improvement, CEP recommends that NCLB be changed to encourage states and districts to group schools according to their needs and provide differentiated assistance according to these needs.

- **Provide funds to enable outside entities to evaluate school improvement efforts.** As noted elsewhere in this report, NASBE’s Study Group recognized that the movement to restructure schools on a large scale is still in its infancy, and much more research and analysis is needed to enable education leaders to identify successful restructuring strategies. CEP recommends that Congress specifically provide funding to enable states and districts to contract for outside evaluators. The Study Group concurs, and adds that such research should specifically include evaluations of full-scale state restructuring plans as well as specific school restructuring strategies.

In addition, the capacity of the state education agency plays a vital role in the ability to turn around schools and districts. In some states, SEAs simply do not have the personnel to provide the type of assistance that is required to effectively support local turnaround efforts. Districts also face the capacity issue, and frequently do not have enough and/or the right staff. In particular, local districts do not have an adequate supply of trained specialists needed to guide individual schools in their efforts.
School Turnaround Specialists

While there is no one formula for turning around low-performing schools, research clearly shows that leadership is critical to success. A unique partnership at the University of Virginia (UVA) between the Darden School of Business Administration and the Curry School of Education, known as the Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education, has designed a program aimed at developing a cadre of “turnaround specialists” prepared to meet the challenges of turning around chronically low-performing schools. The Virginia School Turnaround Specialists Program (VSTSP) was conceived in 2004 as part of Governor Mark Warner’s Education of a Lifetime Initiative, but has since expanded to include principals from across the country. The program’s key goal is to “develop and deliver the training necessary to provide low-performing schools with high-impact principals steeped in the knowledge and skills needed to accelerate student achievement.” The Virginia Department of Education offers successful graduates of the two-year program the opportunity to earn a professional credential in educational turnaround management.

Recognizing the importance of district support, the program begins with the District Leadership Conference, a three-day meeting that embraces a collaborative approach to improving low-performing schools. The turnaround specialist is joined by the district superintendent and key staff with the goal of facing the issues at hand and working together to develop a strategic plan for the upcoming school year. Immediately following the meeting, the turnaround specialists begin a four-day executive education residential program. Darden/Curry faculty members and leading experts in the field present on topics including best practices for business and education turnarounds, personal leadership, leading and sustaining transformations, communications and conflict, data-based decision making, and leveraging resources. The tangible result of these introductory sessions is the development of a 90-day entry plan consisting of both strategies for immediate wins and long-term improvement. A few months into their new posts as principals in low-performing schools, the turnaround specialists return to UVA with three school-based personnel who will serve as a school support team. These cohort retreats allow the turnaround specialists to exchange best practices and problem-solve the real world challenges they face in their respective schools, as well as plan collaboratively with their school support team. Halfway through the school year, the turnaround specialists meet once again with key district stakeholders to ensure that the district keeps its end of the bargain and provides the necessary support to accelerate and sustain change. During the second year of the program, the specialists return to UVA for an additional executive education session, as well as a cohort retreat with their school support team.

VSTSP has developed a comprehensive, three-tiered support system that provides each specialist with the knowledge and resources necessary to accomplish the extraordinary goal of turning a school around.

- **Peer Coach:** A member of the cohort team who helps guide decisions based on best practices. The peer coach provides a unique perspective as he or she is undergoing the same process.
District Point Person: Part of the district’s commitment is designating a high-level staff member in the district office the responsibility of supporting and mentoring the turnaround specialist throughout the program.

PLE Program Director: A member of the Darden/Curry team is available to offer guidance and help navigate challenges.

Governor Warner approved an incentive system for Virginia turnaround specialists in the spring of 2005: $5,000 upon completion of the training and the development of their strategic plan, $50 per pupil for each year in the program as discretionary funding, and an $8,000 salary differential in the first year and $15,000 in the next two years if they meet turnaround targets. This funding acknowledges the magnitude of both the challenge and the effort it takes to turn around a troubled school and rewards hard work accordingly.

Lessons Learned and Results to Date

To date, the program has had considerable success: 12 of 18 schools in their first year of the program either made AYP or saw at least a 10 percent reduction of failure rates in reading or math for a 67 percent rate of success (combined results for cohorts I and II). These are urban or rural Title I schools that had not previously made AYP for at least two consecutive years.

Research conducted by the Darden/Curry Partnership revealed several lessons about what it takes to turn schools around:

- Principals in successful school turnarounds do many things that principals in less successful school turnarounds do—they just do them better.

- Every turnaround specialist, regardless of whether they lead elementary or secondary schools, needs a solid grounding in the elements of good reading instruction.

- Successful turnaround specialists do not operate by themselves. They require support at the school and the district level. In some cases, support is needed from outside the district as well.37
Turnaround Specialist in Action: A Profile of Rosalind Taylor

“You can’t allow problems to persist and hope that things will change—you have to act!”

—Rosalind Taylor, turnaround specialist and principal

Woodville Elementary School serves an economically depressed area of Richmond, Virginia. Of the approximately 500 students in prekindergarten through grade five, 96-percent receive free or reduced price lunch and many live in the housing projects surrounding the school. Violence in the neighborhood is not uncommon. Principal Rosalind Taylor told the Study Group members of a recent incident where summer school students walked past the scene of a murder on their way to class. Despite the challenges, Mrs. Taylor works diligently each day to make the school a sanctuary and safe haven for students. This passion and dedication to the students and faculty at Woodville are just two of the many reasons district superintendent Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman nominated her for the inaugural cohort of the Virginia School Turnaround Specialists Program.

Mrs. Taylor began the program the summer before the 2004-05 school year, and in January 2006 was awarded the Credential in Turnaround Leadership for the successful achievement of her students at Woodville Elementary School. Since becoming the principal at Woodville, the school has become fully accredited, has made AYP for two years in a row, and is no longer in improvement under both the state and federal accountability systems.

Key Factors in Woodville’s Success:

- **Engage and Empower Staff:** “We’re getting people more on board with our mission, vision, and focus...they weren’t my goals; they were ours.”

One of the first activities in the strategic plan that the turnaround specialists work on while at UVA is to “develop and implement a vision of learning that shared and supported by staff and community.” When Mrs. Taylor returned from UVA, she held a staff retreat at a local country club and included everyone in the building—teachers, classroom aides, and office, cafeteria, and janitorial staff. She made it a point to hold the retreat at an upscale locale, even going so far as to seek an outside sponsor to cover costs, in order to show staff her appreciation for attending on non-contractual time. She initiated a team approach and assigned everyone a role in helping turn Woodville around. Over the course of the school year, professional development topics were selected by staff to suit their needs. When she felt it was important to implement looping, where teachers move with his or her students to the next grade level, she gave the first grade staff the autonomy to form their own classes if they agreed to participate. It is this trust, coupled with high expectations, that helped create the buy-in and support necessary for success.
Using Data: “Data has been the catalyst for our changes. We are constantly facing our brutal facts and engaging in ongoing problem solving.”

“Brutal facts” is a phrase that staff at Woodville hears often and, as Mrs. Taylor told the Study Group members, “When they see it in black and white, they either change or leave.” Woodville has put in place a comprehensive formative assessment program that monitors student achievement on a weekly basis. Teachers are held responsible for analyzing their classroom data and making appropriate changes. Students in the upper grades track their own progress.

In addition to academic achievement data, Woodville tracks and reviews data on attendance and discipline. To combat student truancy, staff developed an attendance action plan, holds weekly attendance committee meetings, and formed a partnership with local police to pick up students and, when necessary, take parents to court.

Community Partnerships: “Some days it feels like Grand Central Station with all the volunteers, tutors, and support staff we enlist.”

Building community partnerships has been key to Woodville’s success and has vastly increased the resources and opportunities available to students. Mrs. Taylor hired a full-time volunteer coordinator with funds from the Micah Initiative, an outreach effort of a prominent Richmond church. In addition, Mrs. Taylor developed a “Citizens Advisory Team” that works with the Richmond community to bring resources into the school.

Parental Involvement: “We have to educate our parents just as much as our students.”

Building parental support has been and continues to be a serious challenge for Woodville. When she first arrived, the PTA had been dissolved because drug deals were taking place during meetings. Mrs. Taylor saw this as an opportunity to build a new PTA from the ground up, and with the support of some parent leaders, the PTA is beginning to grow. Parent-teacher meetings were made mandatory, and Mrs. Taylor worked with community partners to offer bus service from the surrounding housing projects so parents could attend—part of her “no excuses” policy.

For more information on Rosalind Taylor and for profiles of the other nine principals in the first cohort, see Lift-Off: Launching the School Turnaround Process in 10 Virginia Schools, available online at www.darden.virginia.edu/uploadedFiles/Centers_of_Excellence/PLE/VSTPS-Final.pdf.
Chapter 3. The State of State Restructuring Efforts

“Many schools in corrective action and restructuring did not receive all required assistance through their school districts; however, most received assistance from their state.”

U.S. Government Accountability Office

Because restructuring under NCLB is such a recent phenomenon, little research attention has been given to states that have a history of supplying systematic support and assistance to those schools and districts that require help. States have adopted various technical assistance approaches. While no flawless system has surfaced, a number of states and districts have had some success in their efforts. Furthermore, there are valuable actions lessons to be learned from schools and school systems regarding their turnaround attempts. This chapter highlights the restructuring activities of three states, as well as touching on lessons learned from others.

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) has followed restructuring efforts in California, Michigan, and Maryland. All three had schools entering restructuring much earlier than most states, because each had begun implementing test-based accountability systems and calculating AYP in the mid-1990s. Consequently, their accountability systems were more advanced by the time NCLB was enacted.

A. California

During the 2005-06 school year, 401 California Title I schools (approximately four percent of the state’s schools) were placed in the corrective action and/or restructuring phase. By the next year, CEP reported that this number had increased to 701, of which five percent were rural, 26 percent suburban, and 69 percent urban. Meanwhile, only a relatively small number of schools exited the improvement status.

At the same time, many of the state’s schools have continued past year 5 of restructuring. NCLB does not offer provisions for schools in year 6 or 7, and as a result, California has not moved schools beyond year 5 requirements, even though some schools have continued to miss AYP benchmarks for as many as three additional years—so far. By a wide margin, the most popular restructuring course of action taken by California schools was the “any other” option (see chart opposite).
Meeting the Challenge: The State’s Role in Improving Low-Performing Schools

State Steps: In an attempt to address the increasing number of schools identified as in need of improvement, California moved to create a system designed to offer financial and other support to these schools. Starting in 2004, the state education agency began to require districts and schools to report which federal restructuring option they planned to use. In addition, the state initiated the following activities:

- **Addressed Funding.** The state set aside $71 million for school improvement, requiring that the money be used to revise and implement school improvement plans.

- **Improved Data.** The California Department of Education required districts and schools to report which federal restructuring options they planned to use (NCLB does not require states to track school restructuring choices).

- **Eliminated State Takeover Option.** The state decided not to allow districts to turn schools in restructuring over to the state.

- **Provided Guidance.** The state developed a more detailed “build out” for each school improvement option, including short explanations for each option that defined terms, gave tips for successful strategies, and suggested questions that schools and districts should ask before adopting options. The state provided additional guidance by requiring that districts and schools that chose to replace staff must present plans to ensure that the replacements are highly qualified.

- **Created workshops.** The state held regional workshops for districts and schools in need of improvement. Special breakout sessions were created for schools in restructuring.

- **Options for Teachers.** Some districts began using Title I and Title II funds to offer stipends to teachers for working in extended day programs or participating in additional professional development.

As CEP reported, California has made significant strides in its endeavor to support schools. However, the state has more ground to make up. For example, California does not provide assistance in the form of surveys and/or workshops to help schools make good restructuring choices. It is also believed that the state needs to offer more financial support and more assistance through monitoring of schools in restructuring. One of the
impediments for the state is its size, which has limited the ability of the SEA to be heav-
ily involved in the planning or implementation of school restructuring. In addition, the
state does not collect specific restructuring plans, but relies on district reporting though
the application process for schools in years 3, 4, and 5 of improvement. In general, the
state gives districts a great deal of flexibility in determining what actions to take at each
underperforming school.41

B. Michigan

Like California, Michigan has had schools in restructuring earlier than other states due
to an accountability system that was developed prior to NCLB. Consequently, the state
was one of the first to have schools fail to meet achievement targets for seven or eight
consecutive years. Of Michigan’s schools in the planning or implementation phase of
restructuring, none were in rural areas, 20 percent were in suburban areas, and 67 per-
cent were with urban areas, with Detroit Public Schools accounting for 20 percent of the
urban total (2006-07).42

The state had some success during the 2005-06 school year. According to a CEP report,
64 percent of the Michigan Title I schools in restructuring improved student test scores
enough to meet all AYP targets—an estimated 58 schools out of the 90 schools identified
for restructuring. The report also estimated that during the 2006-07 school year, of the
90 schools in restructuring, 51 met all targets for two consecutive years and moved out
of restructuring completely.43

Michigan schools chose various strategies for restructuring. In 2004-05, it was reported
that most schools in restructuring chose the “other” option. However, during the 2005-06
school year, most schools reported increasing the use of a turnaround specialist.

The change was reportedly due to a revamping of the restructuring grant application
process. Because a majority of Michigan schools in restructuring were choosing the
“other” and “replace the principal” options—which did not appear to have a significant
effect—state officials began discouraging the use of these two strategies. The application
even began requiring some schools to use a turnaround specialist.

State Steps:

- Earlier Implementation: Although the law gives schools up to a year to plan for
  restructuring, the state has begun restructuring during the planning year.

- Funding: Since 2003-04, the state has used Title I to offer grants ranging from
  $25,000 to $45,000 to schools in various stages of NCLB improvement. Applicants
  were asked to specify how the funding would be used to improve the school. The
  applications must be approved by state officials. During the 2006-07 school year,
  the only schools eligible were those in or those exiting the corrective action or
  restructuring phases.

- Regional Approach: A portion of the set-aside money from Title I went to the state’s
  Intermediate School Districts (ISDs). The ISDs are the regional education agencies
The process of writing and submitting a school improvement plan is frequently laborious and full of red tape, and too often the core goal of the plan—developing strategies for turning the school around and improving student achievement—suffers as a consequence. The Illinois State Board of Education has developed an online system that streamlines the submission process for required school improvement plans. The Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) website houses a number of e-plans, including a school improvement template that deliberately includes what is required by NCLB.

One of the most welcome features of Illinois e-Plans is that the system automatically populates the forms with multiple years of state assessment data and other pertinent school information. This simple feature helps make the process of developing a school improvement plan easier and allows school leaders to take the time to focus on thinking about what the scores mean rather than simply the numbers. In the words of one Illinois State Board official, “It allows school support teams to engage in dialogue about what really matters rather than just jump through a series of hoops.”

Throughout the online planning process, the e-plan screens flash monitoring prompts—the same questions that the State Board will use in reviewing the plan. For example, when filling in the strategies for improving the performance of particular subgroups, the system prompts: “Would the effect of implementing these strategies and activities most likely cause the school to achieve AYP?” Toward the end of the process the system asks, “Would the plan, if taken as a whole and compared to educational research, be of sufficient quality to enable the school to achieve AYP?”

NCLB-mandated restructuring demands a system of support, not one of compliance. As the IIRC demonstrates, technology can play an important role in helping ensure that at the school, district, and state levels, leaders focus on what really matters: helping all students achieve.

For more information about the IIRC, visit iirc.niu.edu.

Limited State Takeover Option: Like California, Michigan chose not to allow districts the option of turning over schools in restructuring to the state. The state did not believe the SEA had the capacity to fulfill this role.

In addition, Michigan has begun to implement comprehensive school audits, which were established to help remove schools from restructuring. The audit attempts to find the specific reasons why schools in year five, six, or seven continue to fall short in meeting AYP targets and helps schools develop a plan for meeting targets. The audit...
uses as its outline the state’s School Improvement Framework (see box at right). The framework includes five strands (teaching and learning, leadership, personnel and professional learning, school and community relations, and data and information management). The framework includes 12 standards and 26 benchmarks. Each benchmark contains key characteristics and sample discussion questions districts and schools can use to guide discussion in the efforts to turn schools around.

Clearly, the state has taken an active approach to helping districts work with schools on creating restructuring plans. The state reviews each plan and sends it back for revision when necessary. The state may also withhold money earmarked for restructuring until plans are acceptable.

C. Maryland

During the 2005-06 school year, Maryland had 79 schools either planning for or implementing school restructuring plans. These schools were in one of just three districts: Baltimore City, Prince Georges County, and Baltimore County. Fourteen were high schools and 65 were elementary and middle schools (49 of which were Title I schools, all of these in or on the border of large urban areas). Baltimore City Public Schools accounted for 45 of the Maryland Title I schools in restructuring.44

As with California and Michigan, Maryland had developed an accountability system that produced annual reports prior to the enactment of NCLB. Schools and districts were given a score on a performance indicator, which was used to determine whether or not they met state standards. Prior to NCLB, schools that did not meet the performance standard were placed on a “watch list,” and schools became eligible for reconstitution when their test scores were significantly lower than state standards. Schools meeting the criteria for reconstitution immediately became eligible for state assistance in improving instruction, curriculum, and administration. These schools were also required to submit a proposal to the Maryland State Board of Education outlining a plan for improving student performance.

After the ratification of NCLB, Maryland built on its previous system in several ways:

- **Requirements:** All school districts were required to have a school improvement plan that has been approved by the state.
**Narrowing School Choice:** The state pre-selected alternative governance mechanisms from which districts and schools must choose. Furthermore, the state asked school officials to provide a rationale for their choice, describe how the alternative governance option would be monitored, and to outline the fiduciary implications of the alternative governance option selected. Additionally, if a school was planning to replace staff or employ a turnaround specialist, district staff would have to detail the logistics of these plans. The state decided against allowing local school districts to turn the operation of a school over to the state.

**Team Approach:** A team of state specialists was developed to provide technical assistance to each district with schools in restructuring. The specialists were tasked with explaining the state’s role in providing technical assistance and the process for submission of alternative governance plans.

**Funding:** School improvement grants were funded through the state’s general assembly. Schools were required to align the expenditure of their state school improvement funds with school district master plans, school district guidelines for school improvement, and their individual school improvement plans. When applying for state school improvement grants, schools and school districts are asked to submit a budget with a brief description of each proposed expenditure. They are also asked to identify the goals and objectives in the school improvement or restructuring plan for each expenditure. Maryland Department of Education (MDE) staff members were required to monitor grant expenditures throughout the year; grant recipients were required to submit mid- and end-of-year program reports.

**Available Resources:** MDE also developed two resources to aid all schools in improvement.

- The department produced a web site designed to help improve student performance through the school improvement planning process. The site provides information about standards, assessments, and AYP. It also includes information about the school improvement process, how assessment data is analyzed and used, and how Maryland content standards are taught and assessed.

- The department developed a workbook for school districts and schools called the “Local Education Agency and School Improvement Checklist.” The workbook outlines the requirements for schools and districts at each phase of school improvement and provides a series of guiding questions designed to help local districts develop skills while completing the checklist. The categories for the questions include curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, parent and community involvement, policy, and budget.

Maryland has had some success in holding all schools accountable to the same standards. This approach has led to all schools being eligible for state improvement
State Takeover in Maryland

Although Maryland does not provide the option of turning over operational control to the state, in the spring of 2006 Maryland became the first state to attempt to take control over schools, using NCLB as justification for state intervention. As discussed in the “politics” section of the previous chapter, the State Board of Education proposed a plan for corrective action for the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) that included provisions that the state would assume control of four restructuring high schools in the city and BCPSS would assign a management company or entity to seven middle schools. The state’s action was blocked by the state legislature. The legislature gave the school system one more year to improve before state intervention in operating the 11 identified schools, but also required BCPSS to comply with the remainder of the state’s corrective action plan.

The Maryland State Board of Education also adopted new rules on public school standards. One of the rules allows the State Board and the state superintendent to take at least one of the following corrective actions in response to low-performing schools:

- Defer, reduce, or redirect state and federal programmatic and administrative funds, including per-pupil funding;
- Order the local school system to institute and fully implement a new curriculum;
- Order the local school system to replace school principals and executive officers with qualified personnel approved by the State Board and the state superintendent;
- Remove particular schools from the direct control of the local school board and establish alternative arrangements for public governance and supervision of such schools; and
- Order a reorganization of the local school system that groups specified schools under the direct supervision of an executive officer who reports directly to the local school superintendent or chief executive officer.

grants, and all schools are now entitled to receive technical assistance from the state. At the same time, this approach has meant that all schools are subject to penalties.

Up until 2003, Maryland did not have a charter school law, so the option of reopening as a charter school is fairly new. However, the state has had a history of using private management companies to fix failing schools.
D. Conclusion

By law, states are not required to track schools’ restructuring choices. However, California, Michigan, and Maryland went beyond the law and began to track which schools were using each of the five options offered under NCLB (Michigan went further by tracking the specific actions schools were taking). These three states had more mature testing and accountability systems in place when NCLB was enacted. However, these states do not present a flawless system. For example, in Maryland, although schools in restructuring received more attention and funding than schools that were just in the “in need of improvement” category, the strategies employed by restructuring schools were similar to schools in need of improvement, and the restructuring efforts did not look much different from other less intensive school improvement activities. In addition, despite earlier attention to meeting benchmarks and targets, in some cases schools in these states have reached year 5, 6 or even 7 of sanctions. California was identified in the CEP report as needing to provide more monitoring. All three states, the report noted, could offer more financial support, a common theme throughout the nation.

There are also some common positive themes across the three states. Each of them appears to be “active” in school improvement efforts, albeit to varying degrees. Each state has offered guidelines to the options list for districts and each has focused on providing support and resources. Lastly, all three states have had some success in providing support through technical assistance. The support has come in the form of regional assistance and the development of state teams in Michigan and Maryland. In California, the support has come in the form of the build outs to the options list.

In general, the states profiled have taken significant steps in building state systems that help make schools better. Nevertheless, the work is not complete. All three states must continue to support schools in corrective action and restructuring through improved funding streams and guidance. And like many states, these three will confront a mounting challenge as more schools are identified as being in need of improvement, even as some schools already identified become mired in year after year of restructuring.
Chapter 4. Recommendations

As the Study Group deliberated on the many challenges and opportunities in school restructuring—and especially as the members considered the urgency of the need for school improvement in many districts and states—the group felt it important to develop several “guiding principles” behind successful school improvement efforts that must underlie any recommendations. It is critical that all who are involved, from state policymakers and agency staff to implementers on the front lines, keep these principles in mind as they develop overall policies and strategies, as well as specific school plans. Following—or not following—these two principles can make or break school turnaround efforts.

- **Have patience even while expecting real change:** Restructuring means different things to different people. Some view restructuring as the opportunity to make small changes. Others understand the value in and need for making significant changes. The differences in beliefs and the pressures of politics may cause many districts to seek quick fixes. Yet research illustrates that school improvement efforts take time. While a few schools may improve dramatically in a relatively short amount of time, most schools will progress incrementally over years. Education officials must be patient, but at the same time not shy away from making dramatic changes in order to see improvement. The literature on organizational change suggests that one way to “buy time” to ensure that staff and the public are willing to stick with a plan over the long haul is to ensure that there are some early victories, even if these gains are relatively easy to come by.

- **Be willing to face the issue head on:** In order to address school turnaround, it’s essential that both state and local education officials directly address the growing crisis. In many instances, officials may be in denial that the problem is really as great as it is, or they may play the blame game. For example, because a high percentage of the nation’s low-achieving schools are in high-poverty areas, there is an inclination to blame poor performance on the conditions in which schools or students reside. Yet as there are many examples of high-performing schools located in high-poverty areas, there should be, as the phrase goes, no room for excuses. Simply stated, the will to help these schools must be present for authentic change to occur.
A. Study Group Recommendations

The Study Group’s recommendations are organized into three sections focusing on recommendations for the federal government, for states, and for local districts and schools. While the recommendations to states are at the heart of this report, suffice it to say that the enormous challenges of school improvement cannot be overcome without the concomitant efforts of all levels of government working together with parents, administrators, teachers, and a wide array of community and professional groups. As several observers have noted, turning around schools requires an “all hands on deck” effort.

Recommendations for the Federal Government

1. Provide increased and dedicated funding for school improvement.

To assist schools in improvement, NCLB requires states to set aside 4 percent of Title I, Part A funds. Of this 4 percent, 95 percent goes directly to local education agencies and only the remaining 5 percent can be used by the state agency to support school improvement activities. The law also includes a “hold harmless provision” that mandates states to distribute their share of funds if district funding would decrease due to the set-aside.

Study Group members heard multiple presentations by state agency staff who universally said that “5 percent of 4 percent is not nearly enough.” In order to meet the tremendous challenge of turning around low-performing schools, it is critical that the federal government adequately fund NCLB’s separate line item for school improvement.

2. Offer guidance for schools that have surpassed year 5 and the implementation of the restructuring plan.

More guidance from the U.S. Department of Education is needed for schools that have attempted restructuring, but continue to fail to meet adequate yearly progress.

3. Provide direct assistance to state agencies to help them develop their role as school improvement facilitators.

The role of state education agencies has changed dramatically since their inception. NCLB requires state departments of education to provide technical assistance to districts and schools, yet they cannot do so effectively without making serious personnel changes, ensuring, for example, they have staff with expertise in content and instruction. In addition, many initiatives are siloed in various departments at the state agency. Modern SEAs must work collaboratively to ensure that all guidance and support is part of a cohesive, comprehensive strategy to support districts and schools. Assistance could include federal grants to SEAs to help them in this transformation. Federal policymakers should also consider building a network of experts who can be called upon to assist state education agencies in their efforts to turn schools around.
Recommendations for States

1. **Profile and understand the schools in your state that are not making AYP.**

Inherent in the design of NCLB’s accountability measures is an early warning system. When schools enter the corrective action or restructuring phase, it isn’t a surprise—they already have been subject to NCLB’s earlier sanctions. It is critical that states track status schools and develop profiles that detail their specific needs. States must then ensure that the schools have the resources necessary to implement their improvement plans and are working diligently to ensure that all students receive the instruction and supports necessary to achieve. Profiling status schools should be coupled with a system for tracking all schools and “flagging” those that are on the performance cusp before they reach the “in need of improvement” phase. Early investments coupled with increased accountability can stem the problems and help ensure that schools exit the NCLB pipeline.

2. **Improve data systems.**

In order to understand the scope of the problem and appropriately match solutions, it is critical that states utilize unique student identifiers as part of a comprehensive data system. State data systems must also be sufficiently robust and dependable to accurately gather the information needed by policymakers and the SEA. In addition, states need to provide technical assistance and professional development to local education agencies and schools on how to implement data-driven decisionmaking and tailor instruction to students’ individual needs.

3. **All states should develop a comprehensive, statewide plan for improving persistently under-performing schools.**

a. The process for developing a state plan should include:

- Realistically evaluating the state education agency’s infrastructure and ability to support district and school restructuring efforts;

- Informing key state leaders on the research, successful practices, and state models surrounding school restructuring; and

- Deciding the overall level of involvement by the state in school restructuring. While state involvement can range from a hands-off approach to a highly active role, the Study Group strongly urges states to be as involved as possible, based on the reality that turning around all low-performing schools is such a monumental effort that only a full partnership that includes schools, communities, districts, and the state will get the job done.

b. The elements of a comprehensive state plan should include:

- A strategy for building district capacity to turn around schools. The strategy can include directly providing training to high-priority districts; developing
regional assistance centers, which can in turn provide support to districts and schools in their area; developing a cadre of turnaround experts outside the SEA who can support districts and schools; and providing grants to districts to build their own expertise and capacity. Whatever the specific strategy, states should ensure that the plan to turn around schools is at scale.

- **Guidance to LEAs on options, their research base, and conditions and environments where they were proven to be successful.** It is the role of the state to offer guidance to districts and schools on the options available to schools in corrective action or undergoing restructuring under NCLB. States should provide case examples of schools with similar contexts that have successfully undergone the process. The key is guidance, not suggestions on which option to select, as it is critical that LEAs and schools have the flexibility to adjust solutions to their unique context and needs.

- **Explicit definition of the “other” category for restructuring.** States need to define “other” so that this option does not provide a loophole that enables a school to avoid making comprehensive and significant changes to its structure and governance. The options made available under “other” should be based on sound research and should facilitate dramatic change at the school level and be directly related to the reasons a school failed to make AYP. Without guidance, how “other” is implemented will vary dramatically from site to site both in terms of the actions taken and effectiveness.

- **State approval (or at the very least, monitoring) of improvement plans for schools identified under NCLB and/or state accountability systems.** Part of the process should include state provision of meaningful feedback on improvement plans to districts and schools.

- **Investments in leadership, particularly at the school level.** Research shows that leadership is critical to school turnaround. States should establish a credential for school turnaround principals with a proven track record of success, much like in the state of Virginia. In addition, states should provide incentives for these specialists to work in schools with the greatest need and provide these leaders with the resources and authority to make changes they deem critical to success, including control over staffing, budgets, and resource allocation.

- **Requirement that all schools develop a school improvement plan.** State policymakers should consider requiring school improvement plans from all schools, not just schools in need of improvement. This may serve as a preventive tool in some instances, while for others it can provide an opportunity to build on current success.

- **A system for tracking, analyzing, and disseminating results of ongoing restructuring efforts.** States are ideally placed to conduct ongoing studies of school and district turnaround efforts and then share what is working—and
what isn’t—with educators, policymakers, and the public. States lacking capacity within the SEA for this work can contract with outside researchers.

**A strategy for building the capacity of the state education agency to ensure it is able to carry out the state’s plan to help districts improve low-performing schools.** Policymakers need to ensure that the state department of education is capable of implementing a broad range of systems, policies, and plans, including robust state data systems, providing (or contracting for) technical assistance, approving and managing district and school improvement plans, developing turnaround specialists, and communicating smoothly with multiple departments and partners, both at the state and local level.

**Options for schools that continue to miss AYP benchmarks even after restructuring.** While NCLB is silent on what happens if schools continue to fail even after turnaround efforts, states must begin preparing for this possibility.

**Ongoing support for schools that exit restructuring.** Turning around low-performing schools is in itself an incredible challenge. Sustaining that success can be just as difficult. Cutting off both funding and technical assistance once a school is officially no longer in need of improvement is a recipe for failure. Schools that exit restructuring should continue to receive support from the state, albeit less intensive. States should develop both short- and long-term support structures to help schools and districts reach and subsequently maintain success.

**Recommendations for Local Systems and Schools**

1. **Focus on data.**
   
   It is essential that data be used to make well-informed decisions. School level data can help identify problem areas and keep a focus on performance rather than compliance.

2. **Invest in and empower school leaders.**
   
   Abundant research has shown that leaders are critical to school turnaround efforts. Education systems must continue to invest in and empower leaders who are capable of guiding school turnaround efforts.

3. **Allow school leaders to create a school culture that works and meets their local needs.**
   
   Education officials need to give principals sufficient autonomy in terms of staffing, curriculum, and budget to create and support an educational culture that fits the needs of their community and school.

4. **Find and place the right talent in schools and classrooms.**
   
   Schools in corrective action and restructuring must have the right individuals
working in them. These individuals need to understand the needs of the students and must be capable of inspiring hope.

5. **Engage and satisfy parents.**

It is imperative that parents participate in efforts to turn around chronically low-performing schools. Parents must be engaged, supportive, and included in the process.

6. **Collaborate with and empower teachers.**

Teachers must support school turnaround efforts. To get this support, teachers need to be included in the visioning, planning, and problem-solving processes that take place in each school. In addition, because educators in the classroom are the implementers, they must receive the help and professional development needed to carry out the mission.

7. **Engage the Community.**

School turnaround efforts are not only a school endeavor, but an undertaking for the whole community. Therefore, officials must reach out to and engage the whole range of businesses, community and faith groups, citizens, and parents.

### Policymakers’ Checklist for State Action

1. What, if any, system is in place in your state to keep track of schools that miss AYP? What checks are in place to ensure that school improvement plans are designed and implemented to directly address the reasons a school failed to make AYP?

2. Does the data system currently in place in your state provide a comprehensive view of every student, school, and district? Does the system include unique student and teacher identifiers that allow for multi-year tracking of performance? Is this data disseminated in a timely fashion broken down by district, school, and classroom levels? What professional development has been provided to ensure that the data is used to guide changes in instructional practice?

3. What entities in the state department are directly responsible for providing support and assistance to chronically low-performing districts and schools? Are these departments staffed appropriately with content and instructional experts? Are they provided appropriate funding and resources to ensure they are able to provide technical assistance and support? Is their assistance guided by research in best practices for turning around low-performing schools?

4. What support does the state offer districts to help build their own capacity to turn around low-performing schools? Who provides the support—the state department of education, regional centers, and/or outside organizations or providers? Is the support plan to scale—that is, are all schools in need receiving the assistance they require?
5. Does your state provide guidance to local education agencies around corrective action and restructuring options and their research base? Is your state currently engaged in research efforts to better understand the conditions and environments in which particular options and models have been successful?

6. Does your state further define “other” by offering multiple options based on sound research that ensure comprehensive and dramatic changes are made to the school’s structure and governance?

7. What is the level of involvement of both the state board and department of education in monitoring and/or approving school improvement plans? Does the level of involvement increase as districts and schools continue to miss achievement targets?

8. Are there any systems in place in your state to ensure that school leaders have the knowledge and skills to turn schools around? Are there incentive systems that help attract skilled leaders to schools most in need?

9. Does your state keep a record of which corrective action or restructuring options districts and schools are choosing as part of a research effort to learn more about turning around low-performing schools? Is there any assessment of how thoroughly the option has been implemented and its results? Is this information disseminated to other schools in similar situations to guide decisionmaking?

10. Does your state have a plan in place should a school or district continue to fail to make AYP even after going through restructuring? How will you evaluate the restructuring process and its shortcomings to learn from the experience and ensure that the mistakes are not repeated in the future?

11. How does your state support schools that have successfully exited corrective action or restructuring? What, if any, technical assistance and financial support do these schools receive? Is there a long-term plan in place to ensure that success can be sustained?
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): An individual state’s measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. “Adequate Yearly Progress” is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year.

Charter School: Charter schools are independent public schools designed and operated by educators, parents, community leaders, educational entrepreneurs, and others. They are sponsored by designated local or state educational organizations, who monitor their quality and effectiveness, but allow them to operate outside of the traditional system of public schools.

Corrective Action: When a school or school district does not make yearly progress, the state will place it under a “Corrective Action Plan.” The plan will include resources to improve teaching, administration, or curriculum. If a school continues to be identified as in need of improvement, then the state has increased authority to make any necessary, additional changes to ensure improvement.

Disaggregated Data: In education, this term means that test results are sorted into groups of students, including those who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for their child’s school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): ESEA, which was first enacted in 1965, is the principal federal law affecting K-12 education. The No Child Left Behind Act is the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Limited English proficient (LEP) is the term used by the federal government, most states, and local school districts to identify those students who have insufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms. Increasingly, English language learner (ELL) is used in place of LEP. (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs)

Local Education Agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state.

Restructuring: When schools or districts fail to make AYP for four consecutive years, they initiate planning for school restructuring. If they fail to reach AYP targets the following year, they implement their restructuring plan. The restructuring provisions of
NCLB outline five options that districts can select after a school fails to make AYP for five years: reopen as a charter, replace all or most of the staff, contract with an outside entity, initiate state takeover, and “other.” (NASBE)

**Safe Harbor Provision:** An exemption to the standard AYP calculation. Under this provision, if a subgroup fails to make AYP, but demonstrates a 10 percent reduction in the percentage of non-proficient students, so long as the subgroup meets its attendance or graduation rate targets, it is considered to have met AYP. (NASBE)

**State Educational Agency (SEA):** The agency primarily responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

**Subgroup:** In addition to the group of ALL children, the following subgroups are included in calculating AYP:

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch
- Students with Disabilities
- Students with Limited English Proficiency

**Title I:** The first section of the ESEA, Title I refers to programs aimed at America’s most disadvantaged students. Title I Part A provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in high-poverty schools to enable those children to meet challenging state academic content and performance standards. Title I reaches about 12.5 million students enrolled in both public and private schools.


6. S. Stullich et al., 2006.

7. Center on Education Policy, *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act* (Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy, 2006).


12. Center on Education Policy, *From the Capital to the Classroom*.


32. V. Honawar, “Maryland Lawmakers Override Veto; Baltimore Schools Stay in Local Control,” *Education Week* (Bethesda, MD: Education Week, Published online April 10, 2007).


34. Center on Education Policy, *Moving Beyond Identification*.


36. Center on Education Policy, *Moving Beyond Identification*.


40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.
