



7 Tenets to Sustain Successful School Turnaround

Part of a Series on Implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act

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District and state authority

Embrace the need for dramatic redesign by granting authority for districts, and ultimately the state, to intervene directly in failing schools. This includes the ability to hire and fire staff and school leaders; make spending and other resource allocation decisions; change the school day, week, or year; and implement new instructional programs. Districts and states can also use their authority to give schools more support and autonomy.

Multiyear resources

Provide significant multiyear resources to support turnaround planning, restructuring of the school's operations, and building the capacity of educators. States should also leverage competitive grant programs with rigorous review processes to ensure that funds are allocated first to districts most likely to use them well, while giving other districts time to develop and demonstrate similarly strong plans, evidence, and commitment.

The district as a unit of change

Develop a systems-based approach that treats the district, not just the school, as the unit of change and that includes feedback loops for both the state and districts. Districts have policies, procedures, and rules that greatly influence the ability of schools to accomplish their goals. Accordingly, districts should develop plans for sustainability that transform the system conditions that contributed to school failure, including the impact of feeder schools, and maintain the critical components of their turnaround plans.



Multiyear resources are pivotal to sustainable, dramatic redesign.



Districts, not just schools, are the units of change for sustainable turnaround.

Tiers of intervention

Create transparent tiers of intervention and support based on both quantitative and qualitative metrics that combine early intervention with ongoing capacity building and sharing best practices. States should include in these tiered systems multiple levels of additional funding, supports, and flexibility based on school and district need. States should also articulate clear parameters around which interventions are the state or districts' responsibility, and both states and districts must develop and maintain their internal capacity to sustain this work.

Stakeholder engagement

Develop and implement structures and processes for the state and districts to engage with families, communities, teachers and their representatives, and other stakeholders throughout the turnaround process. The most successful school turnaround efforts are those in which the state and districts have made stakeholder engagement a core part of their strategies, particularly at the very early stages of the turnaround process. This includes in the development of state-level policies and strategies and in the initial turnaround planning stage at the local level.

Teacher and leader pipelines

Create pipeline programs for developing and supporting effective turnaround school leaders. A sufficient supply of principals with the knowledge and skills to lead the turnaround effort effectively is one of the biggest challenges of this work. As a result, quality state- and district-level programs are needed to identify promising school leaders and provide them with high-quality training and professional development, including mentoring and shadowing, placement in high-need schools, and continued on-the-job support.

Evaluation and evidence

Embed evaluation and evidence-building activities in school-level implementation, such as through partnerships with higher education and research organizations, to determine the impact of policy and programming on school outcomes.

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Engaging and supporting the people involved in the turnaround process is critical for success.



Rigorously evaluate turnaround activities to understand what is working and share lessons learned.