

This response was prepared for the Nevada Interim Committee on Education

In addition to providing information about education policy and practice in the 50 states, ECS staff is available to review bill drafts, testify at legislative hearings and consult on Pre-K to postsecondary issues.

Your Request:

The committee requested notes regarding comments on low performing schools delivered before the Interim Committee on Education on February 25, 2014.

Our Response:

Research and Information on Low Performing Schools

- **Types of systemic approaches (sometimes overlapping):**
 - Empowerment zones or innovation schools
 - Mayoral takeovers
 - School Improvement Grants (SIG) (with accompanying plans)
 - Interventions driven by NCLB: most have adopted weakest of options--"other" major restructuring--instead of reopen as charter; replace all or most staff; contract with operator; state operation
 - Statewide RTI: only Kentucky has done this statewide with online support
 - Whole school reform models: Success for All, Accelerated Schools – fidelity and support needed
 - Statewide plan of action: Missouri & Louisiana
 - Statewide achievement districts: CT, HI, DE, VA, MI
 - "Try, try again model": new thinking from Public Impact with shorten time to ID & to intervene
 - **Two points to consider:**
 - Pertinent principle from research on principal walkthroughs for evaluating teachers:
 - More results are gained if principals spend more time **using** "walkthrough" info for school improvement than simply **collecting** it (<http://bit.ly/1fxexLO>)
 - "It is better to monitor LOOSELY that which matters than to monitor WELL that which does not." – John Carver
- **Empowerment or Innovation Schools**
 - Not always connected to goal of improving low performing districts, but can be.
 - Philadelphia and NYC
 - Some innovation school policies simply provide more flexibility to

Key Takeaways for Statewide Achievement Districts for Low Performing Schools

Points to consider

- States can choose best strategies for operations
- Design "central office"
- Establish role of strategic nonprofit partners
- Set standards for school selection and school exit

Options

1. Issue charters
2. Directly run schools with selected managers
3. Contract with management firms
4. Directly run schools under centralized model
5. Statewide plan of action

schools requesting status. Most allow for more staffing, budget, curriculum control similar to charters

- Risk: poor or minimal results from expecting leadership and staffing that has ineffective track record and already identified as low performing
- State Examples
 - CO – 3 year study of 19 schools in DPS; mixed results
 - WA – 2011
 - KS – 2013
 - OK – 2013 – Empowerment Schools
 - NV—
 - GA — 2012 Demonstration Programs
 - WV— 2012 Collaborative Innovation Zone
 - OH—Innovation Schools (2009 pilot; 2011)
- City Examples
 - Philadelphia Empowerment Schools – Abysmal overall performance of the schools listed in 2011 as program’s “graduate schools” <http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/e/empowerment-school-support/about-us/resources2>
 - New York City Empowerment Schools: <http://www.nycempowerment.org/About>. In the most recent Principal Satisfaction Survey, 95% of principals were satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided by Empowerment. Satisfaction does not necessarily equate with improvement.
- **Examples of Statewide Achievement Districts**
 - **LA:** Recovery District
 - Longest – after Katrina
 - Criticisms usually surround focus on charters
 - Mixed research perspectives
 - **CT** – Commissioner’s Network (legislation passed 2012)
 - **DE** – Partnership Zone launched 2010 through Race to the Top
 - Choice of closure, restart, transformation, turnaround (50% + staff change)
 - initial 2010 schools outpaced state as a whole
 - 50% Afr/Amer, 55% low SES Glasgow High – up 16-23% pts in math; 12-23% pts in reading
 - Howard High – up 14-24% pts in math; 9-13% pts in reading
 - Positive Outcomes Charter (52% low SES) – up 11-19% math; up 4-13% reading
 - Schools new in 2011 have not yet met AYP except for Lewis Dual Language Elementary (67-73% ELL; 85% low SES; DID MEET AYP; only science awful – 6% prof. in 5th grade)
 - less impact than HI; of 6 school report cards checked, only 1
 - **HI** – two Zones of School Innovation
 - 5% of lowest performers; high poverty; high native Hawaiian;
 - goal to reduce gap by 2014; eliminate by 2018.
 - getting some results except in science (3% and 7% prof. still)
 - **VA**—2013; too new to have data showing results
 - **MI**—Educational Achievement Authority in 2011; 2012 repealed Emergency Manager and Detroit withdrew; opened 2012 w/15 schools
- **Points to consider**
 - States can choose best strategies for operations

- Design “central office”
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- **Options**
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 - **Missouri’s** new plan
<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/sia/msip/documents/SummaryOfTiers.pdf>
 - **Louisiana’s** new increased and intensive support for districts: <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/newsroom/news-releases/2014/01/16/departement-of-education-launches-increased-and-intensive-support-for-school-districts>
 - **Kentucky: Statewide plan of action and support, Statewide RTI**
 - A Guide to the Kentucky system of Interventions:
<http://education.ky.gov/educational/int/ksi/Documents/KSIrtIGuidanceDocument.pdf>
 - Kentucky’s statewide RTI – FAQs - <http://education.ky.gov/educational/int/ksi/Pages/FAQ-KSI.aspx>
 - Kentucky online support
 - **Building Comprehensive School and District Plans**
 - [How to Write and Create Goals in ASSIST](#)
 - [Building Comprehensive School and District Plans](#)
 - [Priority and Focus Schools Check Needs Assessment Strategies](#)
 - [Guidance on 30, 60, 90 Day Plan](#)
 - [Goal Building Guidance Documents](#)
 - [A Guide for Using the Data Questions](#)
 - [Designations and Protocol Assignments](#)
 - [ASSIST Technical Guides](#)
 - [AdvancEd Summit Presentation](#)
 - **Online database of best practice** submissions – includes some judged “proficient” that connect to schools that improved from “priority” or other “low performing” status
http://odss.education.ky.gov/bestpractices/BP_Search_r1.aspx?view_id=2
- **SIG grants – impact of**
 - **Mathematica’s look at SIG grant** results: On average, not so bad, but individual school results: some no gains, some backwards http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/Education/SIG_Turnaround_fact_sheet_jan_14.pdf
 - Fed. SIG grants: \$5billion investment; 1500 schools since 2009
 - Cohort 1 – on average, making gains
 - Individual school results – some NO improvement or backwards
 - **For California –**
 - Largest improvements in turnaround model (new principal, 50%+ staff change)
 - Also positive by year two in transformation model (change in leadership +)

- Best results turnaround yr 1; with transformation, more gains in yr. 2; “restart” model: minimal results
- Typical changes: longer day/year; other services (health, social); new principal; vertical alignment to standards
- .2 student-level gain for 47% expenditure (\$5,000 per pupil); first-year SIG - .3 gain, \$1500 per pupil; first year was more cost effective, but not dramatically
- **Totally different but promising perspective**
 - **Try, Try Again** model – Public Impact
 - http://publicimpact.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Public_Impact_Try_Try_Again_Slide_August_2009.pdf
 - Shorten time to ID and time to intervene (pre-commit to rapid retry rates – every 1-2 years)
- **Additional resources that focus on what works/what’s needed with high minority schools**
 - **From National Association of State Directors of Special Education**
 - While there are not specific programs that have proven results particularly with the African American students, there are programs that have proven to be valid and can be replicated using a whole school approach for certain practices. School climate, school culture, cultural sensitivity of personnel and cultural responsiveness of school practices have an impact in sustainable progress with minority student populations.
 - Examples of these approaches include:
 - Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): a model of academic and behavioral interventions that are tiered to provide universal, targeted and intensive interventions early and with fidelity. A MTSS approach involves both Response to Intervention and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). These two aspects of an MTSS system tie together interventions designed to address both academic and behavioral barriers to achievement.
 - Cultural Responsive System (CRS): A culturally responsive system consists of policies, practices, and procedures working in concert to respond well to the diverse needs of students and families. In these systems, staff are culturally competent and embrace difference of all kinds including disability, language, racial/ethnic etc. Staff are focused on positive outcomes for all and are well equipped with strategies to support their students and families.
 - Collective Impact: the commitment community partners and education providers solving problems in education by providing wrap around support and resources
 - **Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina, January 2014)**
 - **Preschool-to-Kindergarten Transition Patterns for African American Boys** - Four patterns emerged following a study of African American boys transitioning from preschool to kindergarten
- Four weaknesses in outcomes-based school accountability approach
 - Jennifer O’Day’s study, Complexity, Accountability and School Improvement—Harvard Educational Review:
 - The problems of validity, periodicity, and specificity in the outcome measures, coupled with inattention to information on instructional practice, make attribution and thus learning at the school or individual teacher level difficult.
 - Most school accountability systems still operate from a bureaucratic control model and thus fail to create the interaction patterns and normative structures within schools that encourage sustained learning and adaptation. Most low-performing schools lack such patterns and structures.

- Reliance on negative incentives undermines innovation and risk-taking in threatened schools and diverts attention to organizational survival rather than student learning. Moreover, most current incentive structures fail to foster individual motivation or to reward learning and changes in practice that might lead to sustained improvement.
- Finally, the reallocation of assistance and resources for increasing the capacity of low-performing schools is generally inadequate and weakly specified. Unfocused assistance based on transmission models of learning does little to build the knowledge base needed for valid interpretation of information produced by the system.
- **From ECS Research Studies Database**
 - *Grading New York: Accountability and Student Proficiency in America's Largest School District*
 - Assigning failing grades to low achieving schools as an accountability tool can have a positive, substantive effect.
 - The **F-grade**, which is universally understood to identify the worst of the worst in any evaluation context, was the **only indicator strong enough** to induce a meaningful academic response.
 - *Best Policies and Practices in Urban Educational Reform: A Summary of Empirical Analysis Focusing on Student Achievement and Equity (2006)*
 - The following educational reform drivers do impact student achievement:
 - Classroom driver: Standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment
 - Policy driver: Support for high-quality learning and teaching
 - Resource driver: Convergence of educational resources
 - Stakeholder/community driver: Partnerships and leadership with broad support
 - Attainment driver: Measures of effectiveness focused on student outcomes
 - Equity driver: Achievement of all students, including those typically underserved.
 - *Race, Racial Concentration, and the Dynamics of Educational Inequality Across Urban and Suburban Schools(2008)*
 - Increased access to more advanced and rigorous coursework could have a significant impact on African American math achievement directly and indirectly through improved student engagement and behavior, particularly in predominantly Black urban schools.
 - Reforms that increase the rigor of math courses within high minority schools as well as efforts aimed at desegregation are likely to reduce racial gaps in student achievement.
(<http://www.hcd.uiuc.edu/faculty/labs/llerias/publications/Race,%20Racial%20Concentration%20and%20Educ%20Ineq.pdf>)
 - *Turning Around Failing Schools: Policy Insights From the Corporate, Government, and Nonprofit Sectors (2008)*
 - Leadership issues must be addressed. A recovery plan should begin with the assumption of leadership change. Such a change might not be inevitable, but the burden of proof for not changing leadership should fall on those who argue against leader change. The adoption of strategies that do not pay explicit attention to leadership in their design would appear to be questionable. The absence of attention to leadership, including changes in leadership, is likely to hamper the ability of school turnaround models and efforts.
 - *Home-Town Values and High Accountability: A Texas Recipe for Districtwide Success in an Urban School District* Texas success story – Galena Park Independent School District (urban – 95% minority)
 - GPISD developed professional norms that spread across the district and supported the emergence of professional learning communities in various contexts through seven measures:
 - A district-wide curriculum and a consistent, district-wide approach to instruction;

- Superintendent-mandated successful outcomes on state exams in three years or the principal would be replaced, which resulted in principals becoming highly focused on success for all students and all student groups;
- Success breeds success—early evidence of success was used to motivate and prove to the district's teachers that success with diverse students from low-income families was possible;
- Appointment and distribution across the district of Curriculum Instructional Specialists (CISes), who, in effect were master teachers whose role was to help other teachers improve;
- On time, targeted professional development—instead of focusing on generalized professional development, professional development was provided for specific problems experienced by specific teachers when they were having specific problems;
- CISes that were assistive not evaluative; and
- Long-term stability of the district leadership in curriculum and instruction.
- These seven measures, working in concert, created district-wide professional community characterized by what earlier researchers had found to be the hallmarks of productive professional community: shared norms and values, focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, and collaboration.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10824669.2011.559902>
- *When Educators are the Learners: Private Contracting by Public Schools*, NBER 2012
 - The authors find strong evidence that schools tend to contract with providers used by other schools in their own districts in the past, regardless of past performance. The authors even found no evidence of social learning among schools that share similar demographic characteristics (high percentage of ELL, low pass rates, or being a particularly large school district).
 - This finding is especially significant, given the increasing demand for goods and services sold by private vendors following the implementation of federal accountability policies such as No Child Left Behind, and the more recent incentive programs such as Race to the Top.
- *Sustaining Turnaround at the School and District Levels: The High Reliability Schools Project at Sandfields Secondary School* (2012) (United Kingdom)
 - Sustained success is achieved by commitment to constantly reviewing and improving implementation and strong fidelity to 12 key characteristics of HRO's identified in the study. These characteristics include: belief failure is not an option; having a clear and finite set of goals; multilevel awareness; standard operating procedures; openness to change; constant training; rigorous performance evaluations; diligent property upkeep; organizational feedback, and; prioritizing high reliability over short term efficiency.
 - Future would-be reformers would be well advised to consider using HRO principles in designing the implementation and institutionalization phases of their reform efforts. For full study: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10824669.2012.637188?journalCode=hjsp20#preview>