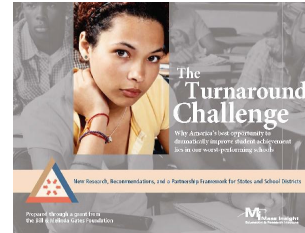


# SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGIES

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute

**TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE.  
WORLD-CLASS ACHIEVEMENT.**



## News and Resources on School Turnaround

Volume 2, Issue 4

[Newsletter Archives](#)

## Turnaround News

### Six States Get OK for Accountability Flexibility

Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland and Ohio all received approval from the USED to move forward with proposed adjustments to their state accountability systems. The pilot program is designed to allow states to differentiate school interventions based on varying performance. In theory, this differentiation should result in more intensive strategies to improve chronically underperforming schools.

Preliminary reviews of the state proposals reveal a range of tactics, from increasing tutoring services and improving principal training to transition into charter school status before current law mandates such changes. Several states sought to change the labeling being applied to underperforming schools. While all or most of the strategies may have merit, the peer reviewers took the unusual step of preparing and issuing their own analysis, which expressed some disappointment in the scope and vision of the responses in general. "The suggested strategies -- professional development, leadership training, instructional specialists and the like -- seemed to be incremental approaches to improvement," they wrote, "when more global and transformative intervention would have been expected." The pilot program did not offer any additional resources, which would have likely resulted in more "transformative" thinking.

Seventeen states applied for the pilot program and Secretary Spellings originally planned to approve up to 10 proposals. Additional states may be added to the pilot program later this year.

Browse [states' proposals](#) and supporting documents.  
Read a [summary](#) of proposals by the peer review team

### MA Governor Proposes Bold Vision for Schools

Governor Deval Patrick recently released his vision for the next round of Massachusetts education reform. His plan, [Ready for 21st Century Success](#), was partially created by members of the Commonwealth Readiness Project. More than 150 educators, advocates and policymakers vetted education goals and strategies over the last 10 months to create a new vision for education reform.

## In This Issue

[States Get Federal Flexibility](#)

[MA Governor Proposes Bold Vision](#)

[Best Practices for Partners](#)

[Financial Incentives Not Enough](#)

[HR Reform Revisited](#)

[Other Mass Insight initiatives](#)

**Purchase copies of *The Turnaround Challenge***

You can now purchase hard copies of *The Turnaround Challenge* Main and Supplemental reports at our website by [check](#) or [credit card](#). Please [contact us](#) to use a Purchase Order.

## Related Media Coverage

[Harper High School's Big Gamble](#)  
By Mike Rhee  
*Chicago Public Radio*, July 10, 2008

[Schools improve: Manatee district](#)

The plan includes some controversial and potentially far-reaching ideas, including a statewide teacher contract, district consolidation, differentiated pay for teachers, expanded learning time, and the creation of a new kind of in-district charter model known as Readiness Schools. The Readiness Schools model could also be used in a turnaround context.

A cost analysis for each of the suggested strategies has not been released and it remains unclear how the Governor could fund his ten-year vision without making significant changes to the current education funding stream. A Finance Commission will release a report in November to highlight costs of the plan and potential sources of revenue. One possibility that could help launch his plan (and similar initiatives being developed in other states): focusing resources and transformative-change reforms on cohorts of the schools needing the help the most.

Read more about the [Readiness Committee's](#) process and final recommendations.

## Other Research & Resources

### Lessons from the Field: Best Practices from School Partner Organizations

Last month, the [NewSchools Venture Fund](#) published the second installment in a series of research, strategy, and best practice reports for use by school management partners. [Practices from the Portfolio, Volume 2](#) explores the following four challenges that charter management organizations face as they expand:

- Principal Selection, Development & Evaluation
- Performance Dashboards
- PowerSchool Student Information Systems
- Facilities Management and Maintenance

Tools, templates and practices used by various school partners are provided to guide others as they undergo similar work and address similar challenges. The report is accessible, understandable, and provides useful tools for school partners to examine their own strategies and implement changes to practices. While it is intended for the charter school audience, its lessons would be useful for anyone seeking to build school networks that serve high-challenge student enrollments effectively.

### Financial Incentives Help (but Are Only Part of the Solution)

In other best practice research, [Education Sector](#) recently highlighted the efforts of the Benwood Initiative. [The Benwood Plan: A Lesson in Comprehensive Teacher Reform](#) details how Hamilton County, TN was able to improve student performance by targeting the teaching force with fairly far-reaching reforms.

Performance bonuses, low-cost mortgages, tuition reimbursement and other financial incentives were used to retain high quality teachers and attract new ones to the district. But the report notes that the financial incentives and reconstitution are not silver bullet strategies capable of bringing about major improvement on their own. The Initiative also increased high quality professional development, enhanced mentoring

[scores impressive gains](#)

*Bradenton Herald, July 10, 2008*

[Three-Quarters of Duval's High Schools Earn "D" or "F" Grade](#)

*By Grayson Kamm  
First Coast News, July 9, 2008*

[St. Lucie school makes big grade turnaround](#)

*By Bryan Garner  
WPTV News, July 8, 2008*

[Amid school's struggle, a reach for redemption](#)

*By Tracy Jan  
Boston Globe, July 7, 2008*

[6 States to Design Own Plans for Fixing Schools](#)

*By Associated Press  
Education Week, July 1, 2008*

[Chelsea schools hit crossroads: Improvements in place, challenges ahead as 20-year BU takeover ends](#)

*By Tania deLuzuriaga  
Boston Globe, June 30, 2008*

[Cheaper than ignorance](#)

*Editorial Staff  
Boston Globe, June 29, 2008*

[Patrick presents plans for education: How changes will be funded is unknown](#)

*By Tania deLuzuriaga  
Boston Globe, June 24, 2008*

opportunities, added new staff members, and encouraged a more collaborative school environment. These non-financial strategies were as important as the financial incentives for the improved performance throughout the district, according to the report.

## Human Resource Reform Revisited

The [Center on Reinventing Public Education's](#) recent publication [Is it Better to be Good or Lucky? Decentralized Teacher Selection in 10 Elementary Schools](#) examines the effectiveness of the school-based hiring of teachers. Site-based recruitment and hiring can result in staff empowerment, increased efficiency, and better alignment between new staff members and the school. But the lack of capacity, knowledge, and rigorous hiring processes can result in unequal distribution of high quality teachers and may leave low-performing schools in worse shape than they were under district-led hiring and assignment.

The picture painted by this document underscores the need to overhaul human resource management in public education. [Strategic Management of Human Capital \(SMHC\)](#), a CPRE Project, is taking aim at exactly that goal. SMHC "uses talent management to develop instructional practices that will dramatically improve student achievement." Case studies of large urban districts, in addition to analysis of the practices of leading HR-focused organizations ([Teach for America](#), [The New Teacher Project](#) and [New Leaders for New Schools](#)), will guide the reform strategies SMHC proposes.

## Mass Insight Initiatives

### Helping States Meet the Turnaround Challenge: Initiatives in Washington and Texas

Mass Insight is working under contract in Washington State and Texas to help those states address the challenge of chronically underperforming schools.

- **Over a seven-month period in Washington**, we are working closely with the [State Board of Education](#) and an array of local stakeholders and partners to develop a comprehensive, transformative strategy for the state's "Priority" schools. [Read more](#) about this work.
- **In Texas**, the [Communities Foundation](#) (which manages that state's massive High School Redesign Project) is working with us to bring the findings of *The Turnaround Challenge* to policymakers and leading practitioners across the state. We are also working with the Texas Region XIII Education Service Center to train the state's regional intervention teams.

States interested in contracting with us on school turnaround strategies should contact Meghan O'Keefe, Project Director, at [mokeefe@massinsight.org](mailto:mokeefe@massinsight.org).

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to improving achievement in public schools. Our school turnaround work is generously underwritten by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

[Project Aims to Improve H.R. Systems in Big Districts](#)

By Lesli A. Maxwell  
*Education Week*,  
June 13, 2008



Mass Insight Education & Research Institute  
18 Tremont Street, Suite 930  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 778-1500  
[turnaround@massinsight.org](mailto:turnaround@massinsight.org)  
[www.massinsight.org](http://www.massinsight.org)

Blackberry users: please consider changing your email preferences to text-only for easiest reading.

**Forward email**

 **SafeUnsubscribe®**

This email was sent to administrator@massinsight.com by [newsletter@massinsight.org](mailto:newsletter@massinsight.org).  
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Email Marketing by



Mass Insight Education & Research Institute | 18 Tremont Street, Ste 930 | Boston | MA | 02108