

# Enabling School Turnaround through State Policy

May 2010

This report represents an extension of Mass Insight's research on the Partnership Zone as a framework for school turnaround. The findings in this presentation focus on the state policies that can be implemented to enable turnaround strategies.

The policy landscape is changing rapidly as states work to align their education reform initiatives with the four priorities specified in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), including turning around our lowest-performing schools.

This document recommends provisions to include in turnaround legislation, supported by leading state policy examples, and offers suggested process steps.

Mass Insight continues to lead research and development efforts in the turnaround sector both on a national level and with individual state partners. Our national Partnership Zone Initiative is funded by an initial grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, with a partial match from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

# Executive Summary

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- States have tremendous authority to set performance and accountability standards and classify schools and districts based on performance;
  - These existing powers are not being leveraged appropriately or dramatically enough
  - In particular, states must intervene *before* the point where schools need to be taken over
- Many states also already have the ability to “takeover” schools or districts for chronic low-performance, but few exercise this option
- The new federal role mandates that states take a more active role in holding schools and districts accountable for student achievement and facilitate the implementation of more intensive interventions in low-performing schools
- Federal law has shifted from a tiered intervention structure to one that focuses attention on the actions taken at the lowest performing schools
- State policy has been rapidly changing as states pass legislation to increase their chances of winning Race to the Top grants
- States can enable school turnaround strategies not only through more comprehensive legislation but also through regulatory code changes, competitive distribution of funds, and other non-legislative actions
- A few states have passed and are now implementing comprehensive school turnaround legislation while a growing group of states are currently developing legislation, drafting amendments to state regulatory code, or issuing requests for proposals (RFPs) to partners to participate in the turnaround process

- State role in turnaround
- Federal impact on state education policies
- Necessity for policy changes
- State turnaround policy recommendations
- Existing turnaround policy models

# Effective school turnaround efforts are required to support the thousands of chronically low-performing schools

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*This year, the federal government has mandated identification of and intervention in the bottom 5% of schools nationally. To address this problem systemically, State Educational Agencies (SEAs) need to implement comprehensive school turnaround efforts that produce dramatic improvements.*

## Turnaround is

a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that

a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years;

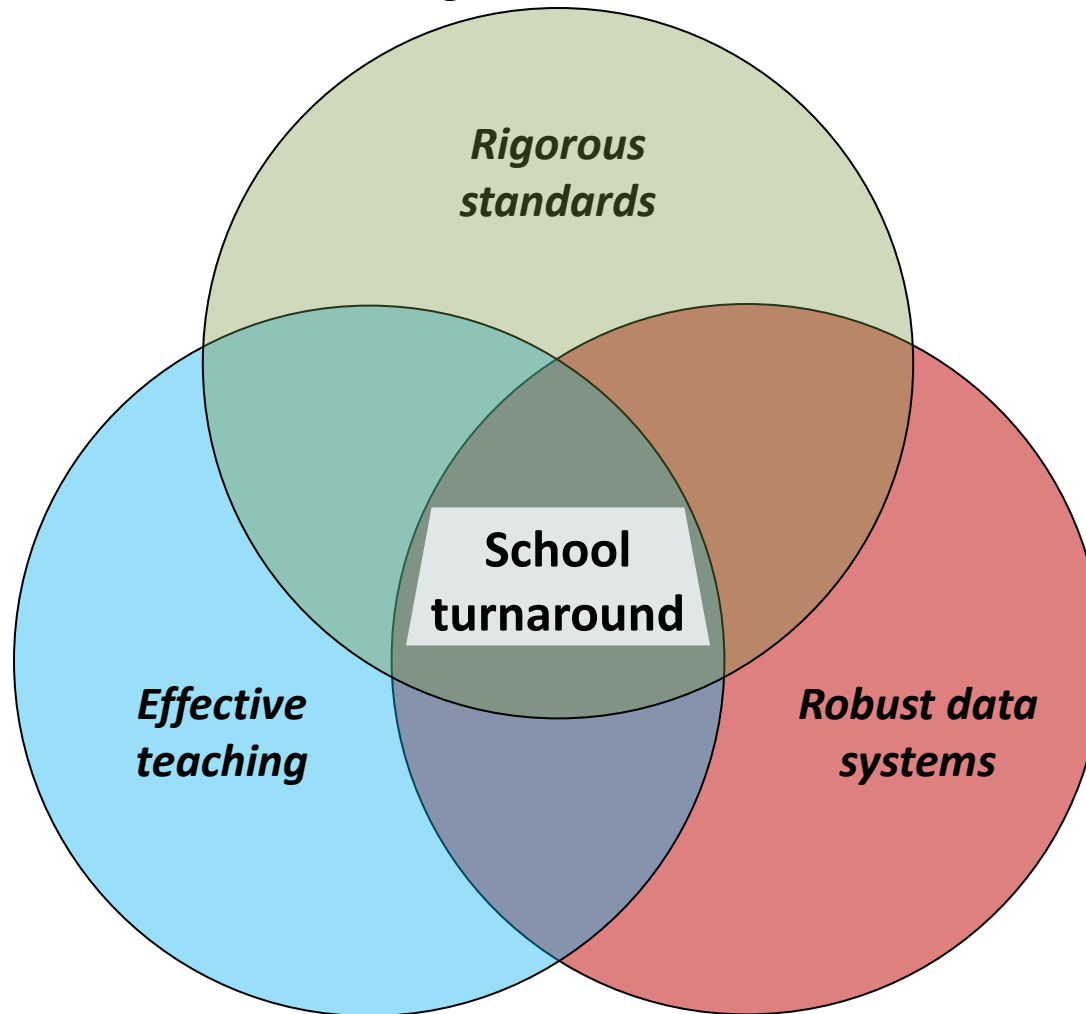
and

b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization

# Turnaround is where the other three Race to the Top assurances interact to effect dramatic reform

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*Where rigorous standards, effective teaching, and robust data systems intersect, our lowest achieving schools can be turned around.*



# State policy must support turnaround through each of these assurances

<i><b>Effective teaching</b></i>	<i><b>Rigorous standards</b></i>	<i><b>Robust data systems</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance dictates that the best teachers must be placed in the highest need schools (i.e., turnaround schools)</li><li>• Effective teaching is the key to any turnaround strategy; turnaround schools must be staffed with high quality teachers and leaders</li><li>• States must secure flexible HR conditions in turnaround schools (e.g., provisions for extended time and additional pay)</li><li>• State must also develop a robust supply of effective teachers and leaders, trained specifically for turnaround environments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance ask states to adopt rigorous, common standards and associated assessments</li><li>• Turnaround schools have demonstrated consistently low performance for multiple if not many years</li><li>• States must ensure that such schools are held to the same carefully defined and demanding standards as all other schools</li><li>• Standards and assessments will guide turnaround plans as well as ensure the performance gains from the initial turnaround period are sustained over time</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance supports the development of longitudinal data systems to track student achievement</li><li>• Turnaround efforts are performance driven; success means dramatic gains in student achievement</li><li>• States must require the use of data in turnaround efforts, including the establishment and monitoring both early indicators and outcome metrics</li><li>• States must build data management systems and processes to support this effort</li></ul>

# States should take the lead in building the conditions and capacity needed for an effective turnaround strategy

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## State role in turnaround

1. **Buck-Stopping Role:** Identify schools that are *undeniably* in need of the strongest possible intervention, as part of a larger, comprehensive system of state analysis, accountability, and support
2. **Table-Setting Role:** Break up inertia, interrupt complacency, declare a moratorium on turf battles, and provide “air cover” and policy/regulatory support for districts and partners to operate within sufficiently flexible operating conditions
3. **Incentivizing Role:** Move incentives and sanctions away from motivating marginal change, towards more dramatic change, and encourage voluntary participation as the route most likely to result in success
4. **Partner-Building Role:** Encourage the development of strategic, managing, Lead, and supporting partners to coordinate turnarounds with district and school leaders
5. **Investing Role:** Provide adequate resources, sufficiently targeted at comprehensive turnaround initiatives and related state-wide efforts to build leadership and teaching capacity
6. **Scaling up role:** Create a mechanism to scale-up interventions that prove to be successful in turning around schools



# In particular, states can establish policies to incentivize districts to choose major change

*States can enact policy changes that either encourage districts to voluntarily undertake transformational reforms or mandate that underperforming schools and districts become part of a turnaround strategy.*

Positive Incentives	Negative Incentives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide additional resources to pay for implementation of key elements of the turnaround plan (e.g., additional time, staff, partner support)</li><li>• Secure flexible operating conditions and a streamlined compliance burden</li><li>• Remove restrictive state and local procurement regulations to enable contracts with Lead and supporting partners</li><li>• Pilot new internal structures and approaches in a “mini-district” cluster that moves the whole district towards redesign and systemic reform</li><li>• Encourage statewide collective bargaining rules for persistently low-achieving schools</li><li>• Alleviate programmatic mandates for schools in turnaround</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Authorize more charter schools to provide competition for low-performing schools</li><li>• Seek state-level authority to close under-performing schools</li><li>• Seek state-level authority to choose a strategy for replacing closed schools</li><li>• Allow states to place failing schools into receivership</li></ul>

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# Old federal role in public education: an abundance of state flexibility, less funding

*Since the last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), states have had tremendous latitude in interpreting federal accountability provisions. In most cases, the resulting accountability standards and interventions have not worked to turn around chronically low-performing schools.*

## Historical state discretion

- Since 2002, states have had discretion at every stage of the accountability process – from setting either rigorous or non-rigorous standards, establishing proficiency levels, determining “n” size for subgroups, setting annual performance targets, etc.
- This discretion has led to inconsistent application of Adequate Yearly Progress criteria across states (i.e., a student in one state could “meet standards” and a student with the same performance in another state could be “below standards”).
- Many states have laws in their education codes that gives the chief state school officer or the state board of education the authority to close failing schools, replace staff, authorize charter schools near the failing school, and in some cases, directly “charterize” a school.
- It is often assumed that the majority of the inflexibilities of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) come from deals worked out between districts and unions. In actuality, a large percentage of state law is extremely protective of personnel and union agreements and must be adjusted through legislation.\*

\* Cohen, Walsh and Biddle. *Invisible Ink in Collective Bargaining: Why key issues are not addressed*. National Center for Teacher Quality, July 2008.

# New federal role in public education: an abundance of state funding, less flexibility

- ESEA has not yet been reauthorized, but federal requirements on how Title I funds and Race to the Top dollars are distributed under ARRA have encouraged bolder interventions by closing off loopholes and eliminating paths of least resistance.
- The USED has mandated that states target the over \$3 billion in Title I School Improvement Grant (1003g) funds at the bottom 5% of schools and that they be used to implement one of four intervention models.
- The new 1003g requirements eliminate the “other” school restructuring loophole, but some state policies will need revision to implement the four turnaround strategies.

## **USED’s four school intervention models:**

### **Turnaround Model**

The district may replace the school’s principal and rehire no more than 50% of the staff; grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.

The turnaround model may involve creating a new school and may include any of the activities required or permissible under the Transformation model.

### **Restart Model**

The district may close a failing school and reopen it under the management of a charter school operator, a CMO, or an EMO selected through a rigorous review process. Ideally, this operator will play a Lead Partner role.

A restart school would be required to admit, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend.

### **School Closure**

The district may close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in higher achieving schools that should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school.

### **Transformational Model**

Districts would address four specific areas:

- 1) developing teacher and school leader effectiveness, which includes replacing the principal who previously led the school,
- 2) implementing comprehensive instructional reform strategies,
- 3) extending learning and teacher planning time and creating community-oriented schools, and
- 4) providing operating flexibility and sustained support.

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# Policy changes are a critical tool to enable and sustain turnaround (1 of 2)

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## *Why policy change is required*

**Districts and schools  
need clearly defined  
expectations and  
consequences**



- Many states have punitive policies in place that are rarely implemented
- In effect, schools and districts feel few consequences for not improving
- Setting standards, growth projections, and consequences ensures that schools and districts understand the expectations and ramifications for not meeting those targets

**Strong relationships with  
stakeholders are useful  
but not sufficient**



- Some state education leaders feel that policy changes and comprehensive legislation are not needed because they have good relationships with local superintendents and other leaders
- While strong relationships can encourage some districts to voluntarily make changes, other situations will likely require a much firmer stance from the state

# Policy changes are a critical tool to enable and sustain turnaround (2 of 2)

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## *Why policy change is required*

**LEAs often need political air cover**



- Some of the policy and practice changes that are needed at the local level are politically sensitive issues
- Having policies in place at the state level can provide district leadership with the air cover they need to make some of the tough decisions and bold changes
- This is similar to how USED guidelines can provide states the political support needed to put additional pressure on LEAs or other stakeholders

**All students deserve equal access to quality education**



- Not all students have equal access to the quality education they deserve
- Turning around one or two schools at a time will not resolve this inequity
- Policy changes can be used to clearly define rights, responsibilities, expectations, and consequences for inaction

# States should conduct a self-audit to determine if changes to policies, systems, and structures are required (1 of 2)

*Use these twelve questions to gauge which policies – and related systems and structures – might need to change in your state to enable turnaround*

## Evaluate Your State's Commitment

1. Has your state **visibly focused on its lowest-performing five percent of schools** and set specific, two-year turnaround goals for student achievement?
2. Does your state have a **strategic, long-term plan** in place to deliver on these goals?
3. **If not, is there any evidence that the state is taking steps to accept its responsibility** to ensure that students in the lowest-performing schools have access to the same quality of education found in high-performing schools?

## Evaluate Your State's Strategy

4. Does your state **recognize that a turnaround strategy for failing schools requires fundamental changes** that are different from an incremental improvement strategy?
5. Has your state **presented districts and schools with**,
  - a) A **sufficiently attractive set of turnaround services and policies**, collected within a protected turnaround “zone,” so that schools actively want to gain access to required new operating conditions, streamlined regulations, and resources; and,
  - b) **Alternative consequences** (such as chronically under-performing status and a mandated change in school governance) that encourage schools and districts to voluntarily participate?
6. Does your state **provide the student information and data analysis systems** schools need to assess learning and individualize teaching?



# States should conduct a self-audit to determine if changes to policies, systems, and structures are required (2 of 2)

*Use these twelve questions to gauge which policies – and related systems and structures – might need to change in your state to enable turnaround*

## Evaluate Your State's Strategy (cont.)

7. Does your state's turnaround strategy **provide school level leaders with sufficient, streamlined authority** over staff, schedule, budget, and program to implement the turnaround plan? Does it provide for **sufficient incentives in pay and working conditions** to attract the best possible staff and encourage them to do their best work?

8. Does your state recognize that **turnaround success depends primarily on an effective "people strategy"** that recruits, develops, and retains strong leadership teams and teachers?

9. Does your state have a **strategy to develop Lead Partner organizations** with specific expertise needed to provide intensive school turnaround support?

10. Within the protected turnaround zones, does your state **collaborate with districts to organize turnaround work into school clusters** (by need, school type, region, or feeder pattern) with Lead Partners providing effective network support?

## Evaluate Your State's Leadership and Funding

11. **Is there a distinct and visible state entity** that, like the schools in the turnaround zone, has the necessary flexibility to act as well as the required authority, resources, and accountability to lead the turnaround effort?

12. To the extent that your state is funding the turnaround strategy, **is that commitment**

- a) **Adequate**; and,
- b) At the school level, **contingent on fulfilling requirements** for participation in a turnaround zone?

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# Four leading categories guide the development of turnaround policy

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1

**Authority and  
Autonomy**

2

**Accountability**

3

**Capacity**

4

**Strategy**

# Promising practices for the development of turnaround policy (1 of 2)

1

## Authority and Autonomy

- Provide schools with greater administrative flexibility and managerial discretion over major school-level elements (i.e., people, time, money, and program)
- Assign authority to mandate that a school or district must implement a turnaround model if they are classified as failing or chronically low-performing
- Ensure state and/or district has the ability to hire external partners for support (either Lead or supporting partners)
- Ensure a state-level leader has the authority and support from the state education chief to make decisions for chronically low-performing schools
- Create a carve-out unit of the state and/or district office to oversee turnaround efforts
- Remove statewide curriculum and program mandates

2

## Accountability

- Clearly identify performance targets
- Ensure that schools and districts understand performance expectations and the consequences for not meeting those goals
- Enforce consequences for low-performance
- Identify who has accountability at each step of the turnaround process (SEA, SBE, LEA, local boards, schools, and partner organizations)
- Make the receipt of School Improvement Grant funds contingent upon meeting performance goals and/or process milestones
- Define a process to either remove or re-train local education leaders

# Promising practices for the development of turnaround policy (2 of 2)

3

## Capacity

- Eliminate barriers for schools/LEAs to select and contract with Lead/supporting partners
- Define an organizational structure to support the schools and districts at the state level
- Secure sustainable funding for  $\geq 3$ -5 years
- Design a strategy to build the capacity of turnaround principals, teachers, partners, LEA/SEA staff, and identify turnaround as a unique HR competency
- Provide incentives for teachers/principals to work in lowest performing schools
- Create an effective phase-out/re-entry process after intense intervention period is complete
- Encourage schools to leverage all available resources toward meeting achievement goals
- Require the use of proven intervention and assessment tools aligned with rigorous academic standards
- Fund expanded instructional time

4

## Strategy

- Draft legislation that crafts an overarching vision of school turnaround
- Allow school-level leaders to eliminate pre-determined contracts with academic and social programs (if they are deemed not sufficient or aligned to the new vision)
- Create legislation that includes specific provisions to extend or expand time, provides additional compensation to staff, allows the use of external partners, and ensures that all staff working in a school have the appropriate set of skills
- Design legislation that specifies significant funds available for implementation
- Ensure alignment and coordination of all improvement efforts in chronically low-performing schools
- Foster innovation and new school designs

# There are both benefits and risks to creating comprehensive legislation for turnaround

## Benefits

- Sets clear expectations for performance of schools and districts
- Clarifies who has the capacity to support schools and districts (SEA or external partners)
- Defines a state strategy and accountability standards
- Clarifies consequences for not meeting performance goals
- Defines roles and responsibilities
- Ensures sustainability if leadership changes
- Reminds all stakeholders that the goal of turnaround is to ensure that all students have a high-quality education

## Risks

- Requires significant political will to push through legislation
- Can be challenging to find funds that could be used to implement legislation (either new sources of funds or reallocated dollars)
- May require significant reorganization within the state education agency
- Requires significant leadership, relationship management, and coordination between and within the Governor's Office, the state education agency, the state board of education, and other stakeholders
- Numerous amendments can weaken the original intention of the bill
- Passing legislation or regulatory code changes is the first step; actually implementing those changes (and enforcing them) is the more intensive and daunting process

# A number of process steps will assist the drafting and passing policy changes

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## **Advocacy**

- Start with a champion
- Engage stakeholders early in the process
- Build public awareness and will for this effort
- Rally independent organizations or consortiums of partners (chamber of commerce, faith-based orgs, etc.) to push for radical changes
- Beware of special interest groups



## **Funding**

- Ensure that funds to implement the legislation are included in the annual state budget
- Ensure commitment to target 1003g School Improvement Grants
- Fundraise private support, including matching private funds with public dollars to encourage the state to commit to the schools



## **Sustainability**

- Ensure that the SEA is able to provide the services that are included in the legislation; if not, ensure the SEA and LEAs have the ability to outsource services and use external partners
- Draft legislation based on other national models

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# The state policy model for school turnaround is evolving

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- A growing group of states have established comprehensive state legislation for turning around chronically low-performing schools.
- Other states are passing regulatory changes and creating preferred provider lists of partners to create some of the right conditions and capacities needed for turnaround.

*This emerging group of states is both passing and implementing bold policies. This group will expand as states continue to develop and redesign turnaround-related policies to vie for the next round of Race to the Top grants.*

Early leading states include:

**Colorado**  
**Louisiana**  
**Michigan**  
**Mississippi**

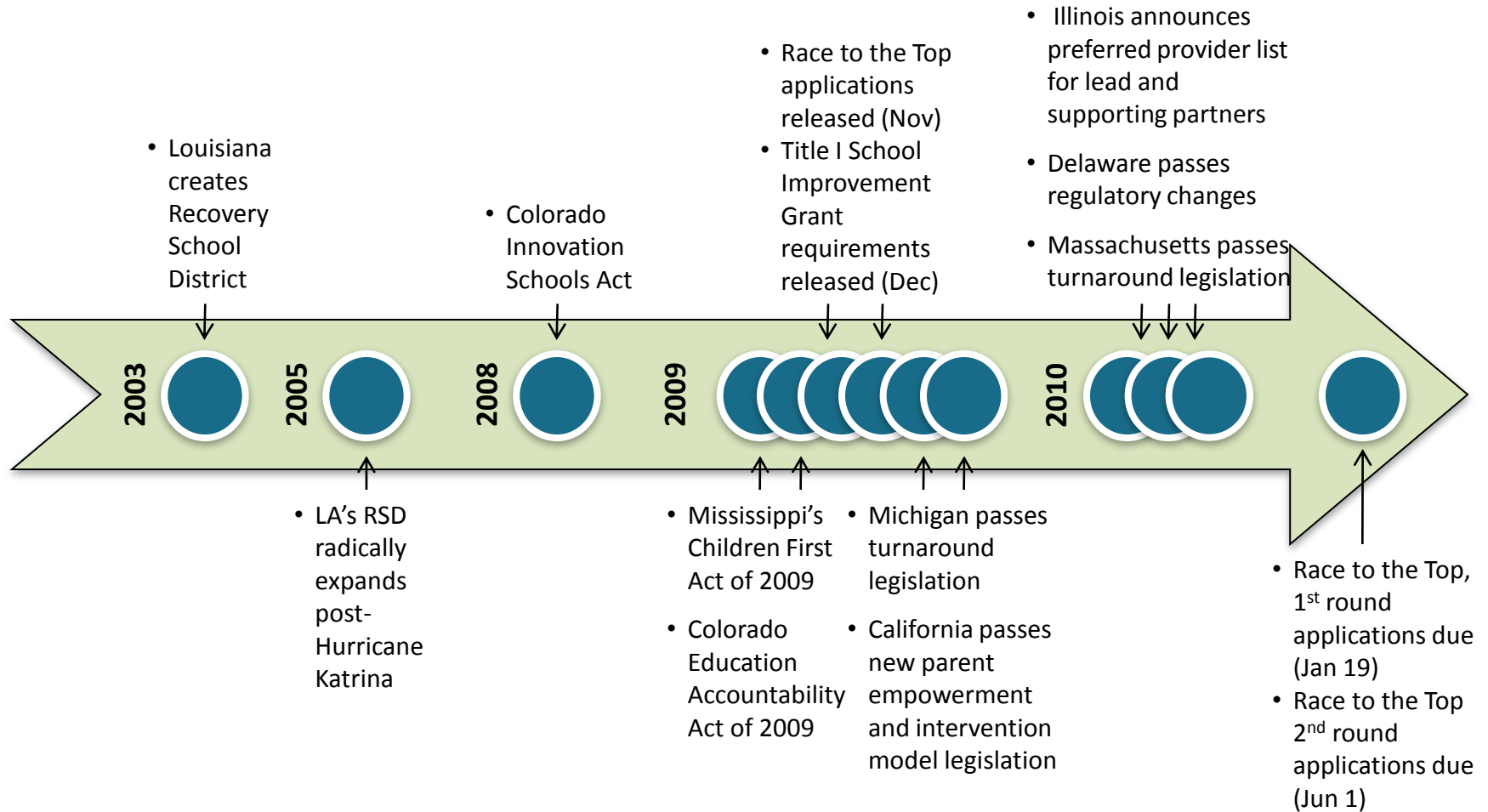
**California**  
**Delaware**  
**Illinois**  
**Massachusetts**

# How the states' turnaround policies compare

*While a perfect comparison is not possible due to extreme variances between current and past state strategies, some important commonalities and differences can be noted.*

	CA	CO	DE	IL	LA	MA	MI	MS
New legislation to target turnaround of lowest-performing schools	X				X	X	X	X
Other major legislation to support education reform		X		X		X		
Regulatory Code changes			X					
Positive incentives for districts to improve low-performing schools		X	X	X		X		
Negative incentives for districts/schools if improvement is not made	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Inclusion of partners as part of strategy		X	X	X	X	X	X	
State ability to mandate change/takeover if needed			X	X	X	X	X	X
Planning/development stage of turnaround policies	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Implementation stage of turnaround strategies		X		X	X			

# At the end of 2009 and into 2010, states rushed to pass legislation for the initial RTTT deadline



# Colorado: Creating a portfolio of turnaround options

## Legislative Portfolio

- **Education Accountability Act (SB 09-163)**
  - Defines a clear method for identification of chronically underperforming schools and/or districts
  - Outlines appropriate strategies for improving student achievement in schools, including requiring a turnaround plan
  - Allows the commissioner the ability to appoint a State Review Panel to evaluate district and school improvement strategies and to make recommendations on needed interventions
- **Innovative Schools and Innovative School Zones Act (SB 08-130)**
  - Allows schools or groups of schools to petition local school boards for increased administrative and instructional flexibility, including the receipt of waivers from specific administrative and personnel laws
- **Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (SB 08-212)**
  - Requires the State Board of Education to create common expectations for postsecondary and workforce readiness and to adopt standards for preschool through secondary education
  - Creates a revised system of assessments aligned with these standards

## Other Supporting Legislation

- **Measures to Raise the Graduation Rate in Colorado in Colorado's Public High Schools (SB 09-1243)**
  - Creates an Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement within the Colorado Department of Education
- **School Finance Act (SB 09-256)**
  - Creates a financial incentive program for high performing schools with large numbers of at-risk and lower income students
  - Establishes the development of a residential math and science academy for students at risk
- **Alternative Teacher Compensation Act (SB 08-065 / HB 08-1388)**
  - Creates a state-level public grant program for the expansion of alternative teacher compensation programs in local school districts

## Other

- Create a comprehensive state strategy to link the various pieces of legislation
- State Board of Education is currently developing the rules to implement the new accountability system

# Louisiana: The Recovery School District

## Overview

- The Recovery School District (RSD) was created by the state legislature in 2003
- RSD is a carve-out district of low-performing schools under the oversight of the Louisiana Department of Education
- Significant support is provided to the district and the schools by a variety of supporting partners
- In early 2005, the RSD managed five schools in the city of New Orleans
- Schools are selected to join the zone due to a prior record of poor performance
- Post-Hurricane Katrina, the RSD radically expanded to oversee reconstruction and reorganization of schools in areas of particular devastation
- Over one hundred schools were added to the zone after Katrina
- RSD's original focus was on Orleans Parish but has expanded to a handful of schools in other parishes as those schools have reached chronic under-performance as well
- Note that the role of the "state as a district" has caused confusion at times

## Governance of Schools

- Low performing schools are managed by one of three different governance models:
  1. **RSD-operated schools** – The state Recovery School District takes on all central office functions; schools are no longer affiliated with the local school districts
  2. **Type 5 charter schools** – Education Management Organizations have autonomy over all school operations, are on contract with the LA Board of Education to meet specific performance targets and have independent boards to oversee the governance and management of the schools
  3. **MOU schools** – In regions where the RSD doesn't have the capacity to take on oversight and full management of schools, the RSD works with the local district and school leaders to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that details the needs of the schools, sets process steps for interventions, and specific performance targets. If those targets aren't met, the schools are incorporated into the RSD.

## Legislation

- Created via **Senate Bill No. 710, House Bill No. 1660**
- Regular Session 2003

Note: For more information on the operations and structure of the RSD, see the STG's *Internal Lead Partner* publication (December 2009).

# Michigan: Broad support for USED intervention models

## Overview

### • Turnaround Schools

- The superintendent publishes a list of the lowest-achieving 5% of public schools
- These schools will be supervised by the state school reform/redesign officer
- School redesign plans must implement one of the four federal school intervention models
- An addendum to each collective bargaining agreement will be included with each redesign plan
- The redesign plan must be approved by the state school reform/redesign officer or by the state superintendent
- A state reform/redesign school district will oversee and manage local districts:
  - If the redesign plan is not approved; or,
  - If the redesign plan is not achieving satisfactory results
- The state reform/redesign officer:
  - Is the superintendent of this newly created district,
  - Has all of the powers normally given to the local school board; and,
  - Has full autonomy and control over curriculum and discretionary spending
- The school reform/design officer:
  - Will be selected on the basis of his or her competence and experience in educational reform and design; and,
  - Will report directly to the state superintendent
- Officer may contract with an education management organization to manage/operate a school/schools
- Officer will maintain oversight of all external contracts to ensure that the requirements of a restart model are met
- Elimination of the seniority system and any other work rules that could be impediments to implementing the redesign should be noted in the collective bargaining addendum

## Legislation

### • H.B. No. 4787, Sec. 1290c.

- Regular Session 2009

Note: Michigan turnaround work is significantly impacted by Detroit Public Schools. Detroit is noted as the lowest performing and most mismanaged urban school district in the country. The district was removed from local control in 2008 when the state superintendent declared that fiscal mismanagement was severely impacting student learning.

# Mississippi: Children First Act

## Context

- A revised accountability system evaluates schools and districts based on the Quality Distribution Index (QDI) of absolute student achievement as well as the rate of annual growth on the state standardized test
- The SEA has had the ability to “take over” schools and districts based on poor performance, fiscal mismanagement, and compliance problems
- Once “taken over,” a conservator is appointed by the Mississippi Department of Education who oversees the day-to-day operations of the district and has decision-making authority
- While many schools have made temporary gains after working with a conservator, the same schools and districts often end up in chronic under-performance again within a few years

## Legislation

- **S.B. No. 2628** (Regular Session 2009) created **The Children First Act of 2009**
  - The Act creates a Recovery School District (RSD) that provides leadership, management and oversight of all school districts subject to state conservatorship (i.e., failing and declared in a “state of emergency”)
  - The RSD is housed within the SEA and is managed by a Deputy Superintendent
  - A failing district is defined by performance when the district fails to meet both the absolute student achievement standards and the rate of expected growth for two consecutive years and can be declared in a “state of emergency” by the Governor
  - Based on the assessment by the conservator and/or the SEA, the local superintendent and/or the school board may be removed
  - The Education Employment Procedures Law no longer applies to any category of employee in a district once declared in a “state of emergency;” this allows additional autonomies over staffing decisions

## Other

- Mississippi has a number of key next steps in this effort:
  - Appoint Deputy Superintendent to lead Recovery School District
  - Identify districts most likely to enter RSD if student performance targets are not met
  - Create MOUs with these districts to specify performance goals and process milestones
  - Build capacity at SEA to intervene in schools and districts
  - Create a pipeline of turnaround principals, teachers, and conservators
  - Create policies for the operation and management of the RSD

# Other states making promising policy changes (1 of 2)

## California

- ***Open Enrollment and Parental Empowerment***
  - An LEA must implement one of the four federal intervention models if,
    - It is in corrective action and continues to fail to make AYP;
    - The school has an Academic Performance Index score under 800; and,
    - At least ½ of the parents or legal guardians of students attending the school sign a petition requesting the LEA implement one of the other models
  - The state is required to reimburse any costs mandated by the state, including those required for the implementation of the specified intervention model
  - The parent of a student enrolled at a low-achieving school (as identified by the superintendent) may submit an application for the student to attend a different, higher-performing school regardless of district residency
- **S.B. No. 4, SBX5 4**
  - Status - Passed
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session 2009-10

## Delaware

- **Regulatory changes: *103 Accountability for Schools, Districts and the State***
  - Defines persistently low-achieving schools as any Title I or Title I eligible school that is among the lowest-achieving 5% of schools
  - Details improvement levels and required actions at each level
  - Secretary may determine that a persistently low-achieving school – based on chronic under-performance of the “all students” group – should become a Partnership Zone school
  - Districts with Partnership Zone schools (traditional or charter) will sign an MOU with the SEA
  - The MOU specifies the turnaround model (of the four federal options) that will be implemented, whether or not external partners will be incorporated into the model, and the supports the SEA will provide
  - An additional agreement between the district, the SEA, and the local collective bargaining unit must also be created to address work conditions and policies that may inhibit the successful implementation of the turnaround model
- **Statutory Authority 14 Delaware Code, Section 122(D)**
  - Status - Passed
  - Amendment to existing legislation



# Other states making promising policy changes (2 of 2)

## Illinois

- While the state has not passed turnaround-specific legislation, the state board of education has the ability to take over the management of a school or district for fiscal or compliance problems or severe underperformance; this authority has been exercised, but not frequently
- Education leaders will likely submit legislation to create the Illinois Partnership Zone in 2010
- The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recently established a list of pre-qualified providers for the Illinois Partnership Zone that will offer services and programs to assist school districts with school improvement efforts in Illinois' lowest-performing schools
- Lead Partners will have management authority over the schools, but the program models will vary
- Supporting Partners will be used to supplement district, school, or Lead Partner services in a specific area, such as turnaround leadership training or reform of district recruitment and hiring practices
- The preferred providers will be contracted for these services in one of two ways:
  - Directly by a school district that has successfully competed for a federal 1003g School Improvement grant; or
  - Directly by ISBE to work with schools in districts identified by the agency

## Massachusetts

- *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap*
  - Defines the lowest-performing group of schools (20%) and districts (5%) based on Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores
  - If parties (LEA and local union) are not able to reach an agreement on collective bargaining, the commissioner has the authority to resolve the issues
  - Dispute resolution includes commissioner and a representative of the American Arbitration Association who has an educational background
  - Superintendents gain ability to dismiss or fail to rehire a teacher for good cause
  - Allows increased autonomy at the school-level for underperforming schools
  - Expedited turnaround plans for schools previously designated as underperforming
  - Allows the creation of additional Horace Mann/Innovation schools
- S.B. 2247
  - Status - Passed
  - January 14, 2010

# Additional Resources

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- LeFlock, Boyle, & Therriault. *Help wanted: State capacity for school improvement*. American Institutes for Research, 2008.
- *SEA Capacity & Leadership Self-Assessment Tool*. Council of Chief State School Officers, March 2008.
- Scott, Caitlin. *Improving Low-Performing Schools: Lessons from five years of studying school restructuring under No Child Left Behind*. Center on Education Policy, December 2009.
- State legislative texts can be found in the Turnaround Challenge Resource Center, <http://www.massinsight.org/turnaround/reports.aspx>.

# Get involved

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For more information on how your state can develop model policies to enable school turnarounds, please contact Mass Insight at:

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**[turnaround@massinsight.org](mailto:turnaround@massinsight.org)**

To learn more about “The Turnaround Challenge” and our Partnership Zone Initiative, please visit our website at [www.massinsight.org](http://www.massinsight.org).

*The presentation and related documents are the result of a research and development process led by Mass Insight with the support of various partners.*

*It should be used in conjunction with the Main Report, “The Turnaround Challenge: Why America’s best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst performing schools,” and a variety of other resources we have developed and distributed.*