

Partnership Zones: Selecting and Attracting Lead Partners to Support Turnaround Schools

October 2009

*A Mass Insight report produced with Apollo
Philanthropy Partners*

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This report represents an extension of Mass Insight's research on Partnership Zones as a model for school turnaround. The findings in this presentation focus on the market for Lead Partners.

Field work for this document was performed by Apollo Philanthropy Partners. Their findings are derived from in-depth interviews with potential Lead Partners, primarily charter management organizations and school design and support organizations. Details and quotations from these organizations have been disguised in this document.

Mass Insight continues to lead research and development efforts on the Lead Partner marketplace both on a national level and for individual state partners. Our national Partnership Zone Initiative is funded by an initial grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Additional support for this research was provided by the Communities Foundation of Texas and the Greater Texas Foundation.

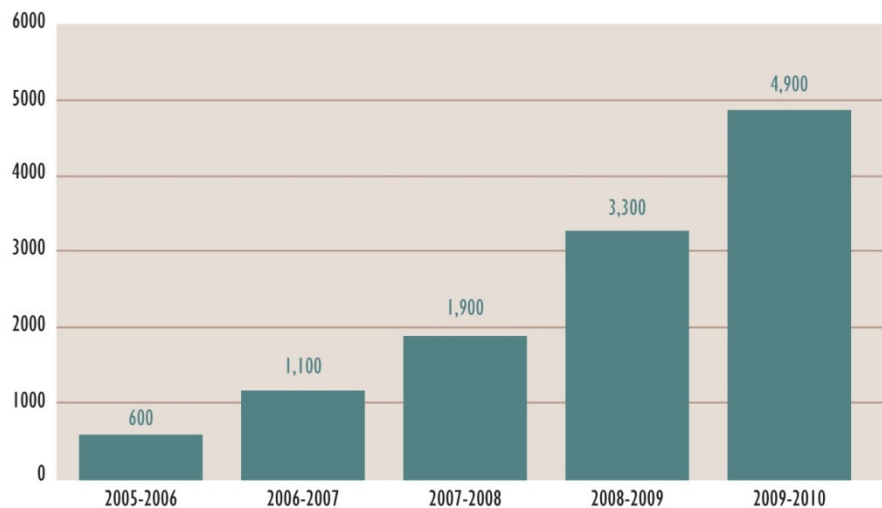
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- Review of Partnership Zone framework (slides 4 - 9)
- Analysis of Lead Partner marketplace (slides 11 - 34)
 - Definition of a Lead Partner
 - Attracting Lead Partners
 - Characteristics of optimal Lead Partners

Nearly 5,000 schools, representing 2.5 million students, will be in Restructuring by 2010

The scale of the problem

FIGURE 1B Nearly 5,000 Schools Are Projected to Be in Restructuring by 2010



Projections are based on actual 2005-2006 data for schools in Restructuring Status under NCLB with the assumption that the rate of schools leaving that status will remain constant over the next four years. Source of 2005-06 data: Center on Education Policy (2006).



Turning around these largely high-poverty schools will directly and dramatically reduce the achievement gap

The implications of inaction

- High-poverty students often enter school 2 years behind non-poverty classmates; this gap persists through college
- If the U.S. had closed the income gap between 1983 and 1998, the GDP in 2008 would have been \$440 - 670 billion higher
- A high school dropout is 5 - 8 times more likely to be incarcerated than a college graduate

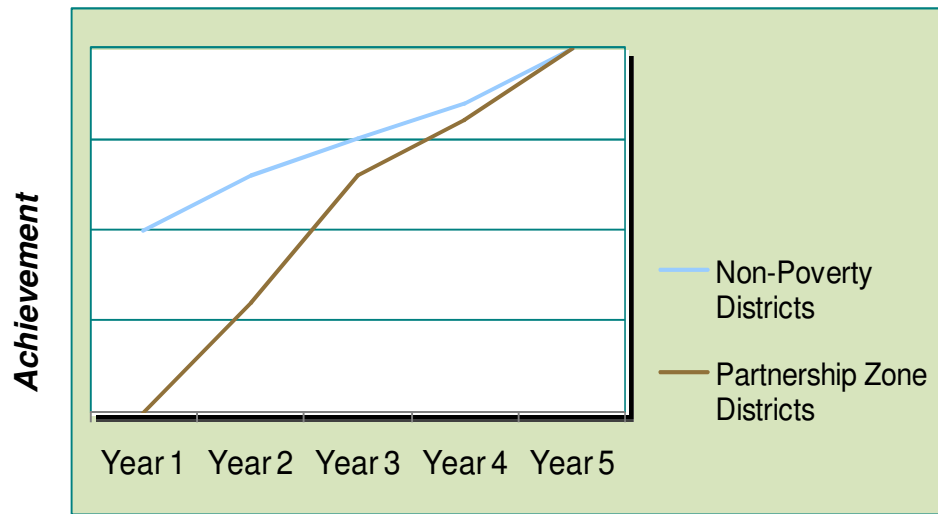
Sources: Center for Education Policy, Editorial Projects in Education Resource Center (2008), Mass Insight, The Turnaround Challenge (2007), McKinsey, The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools, (2009), Moretti, The Price We Pay (2007), National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The Partnership Zone model enables effective school turnaround

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

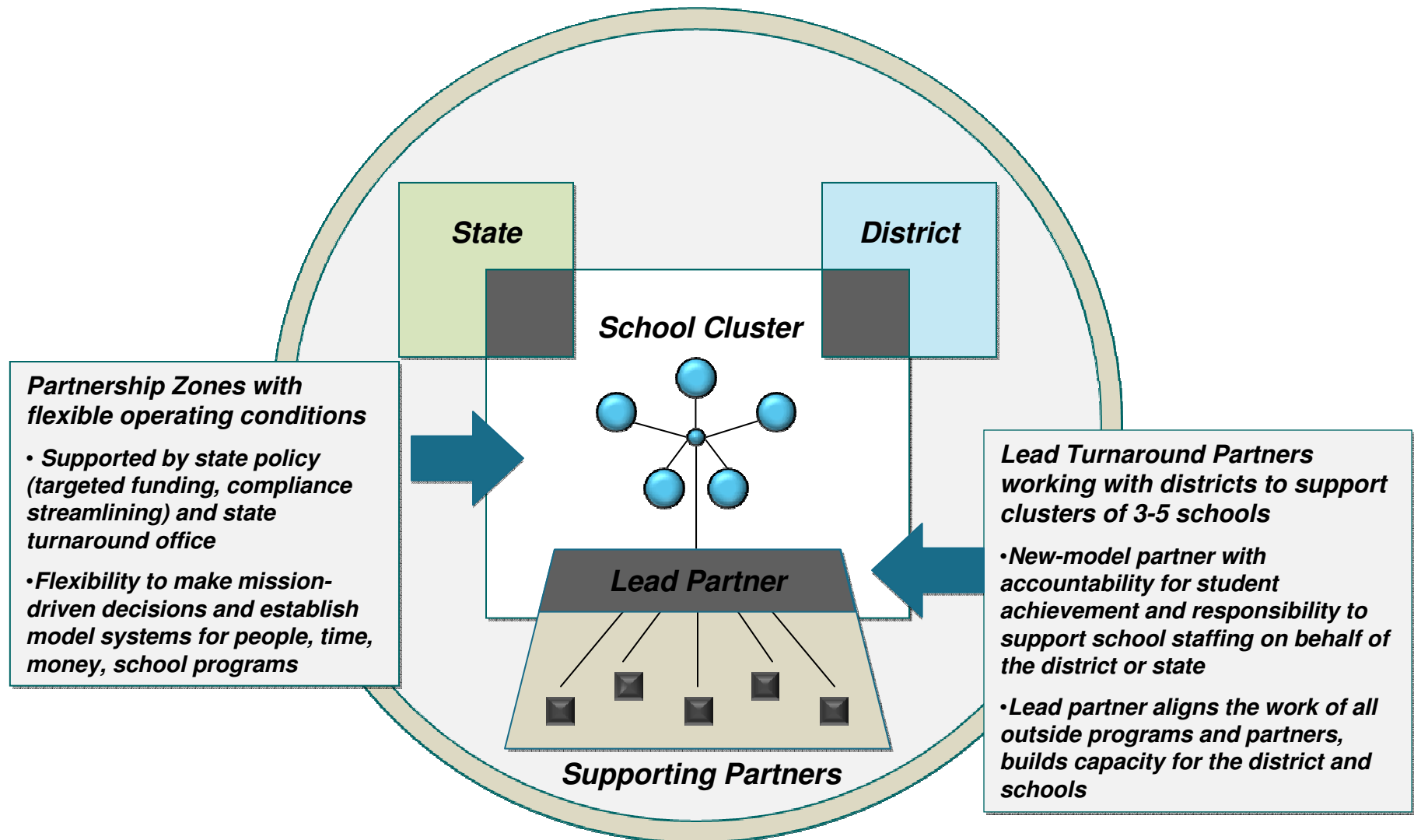


Within five years, turnaround schools should match the average achievement levels of non-poverty schools within their state

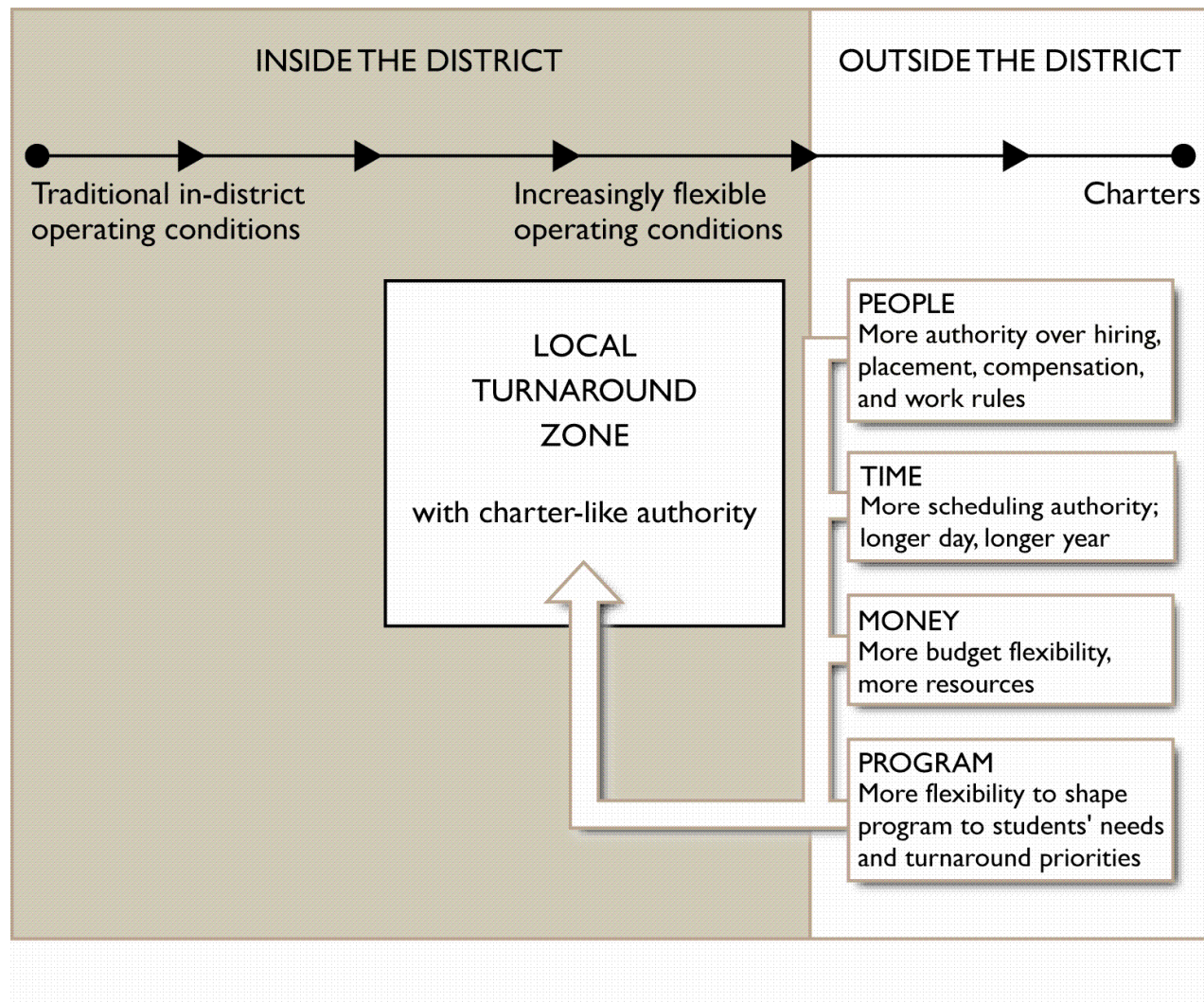
Achieving the goal at scale: Three Cs shape zones, partnerships, and school clusters

<i>What's needed to enable schools and districts to address the challenges of chronically underperforming schools?</i>		
<u>Conditions</u>	Change the rules and incentives governing people, time, money, & program within a “carved out” zone	 ZONES
<u>Capacity</u>	Build turnaround resources & human capacity in schools within the zone through “lead turnaround partners” and, in parallel, reform district services and systems	 PARTNERSHIPS
<u>Clustering</u>	To get to scale, organize clusters of schools within the zone intentionally and systematically: vertically by feeder patterns, by common school challenges, or by proximity	 CLUSTERS OF SCHOOLS

Partnership Zones demonstrate model conditions, capacity through partners, and scale through clusters

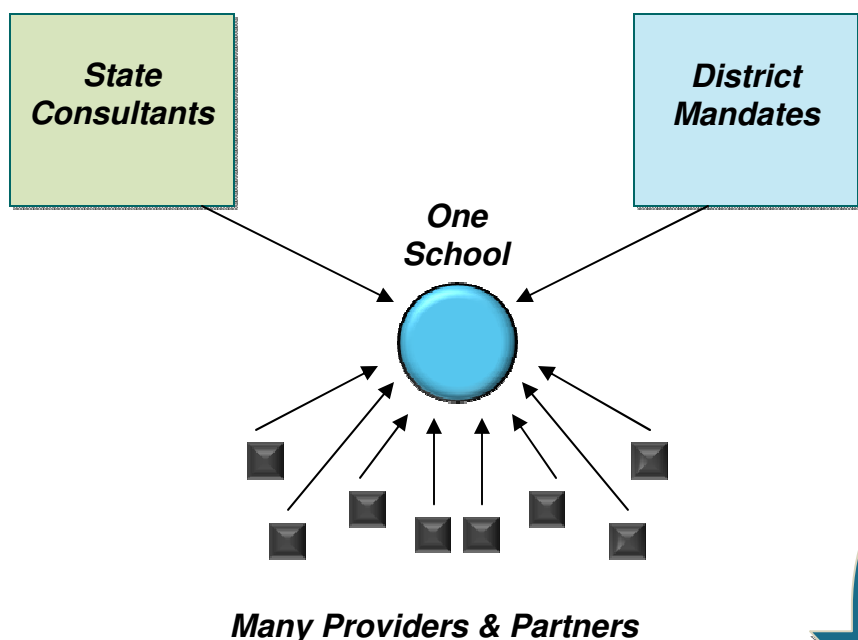


Turnaround requires conditions change: outside-the-system approaches, applied inside the system

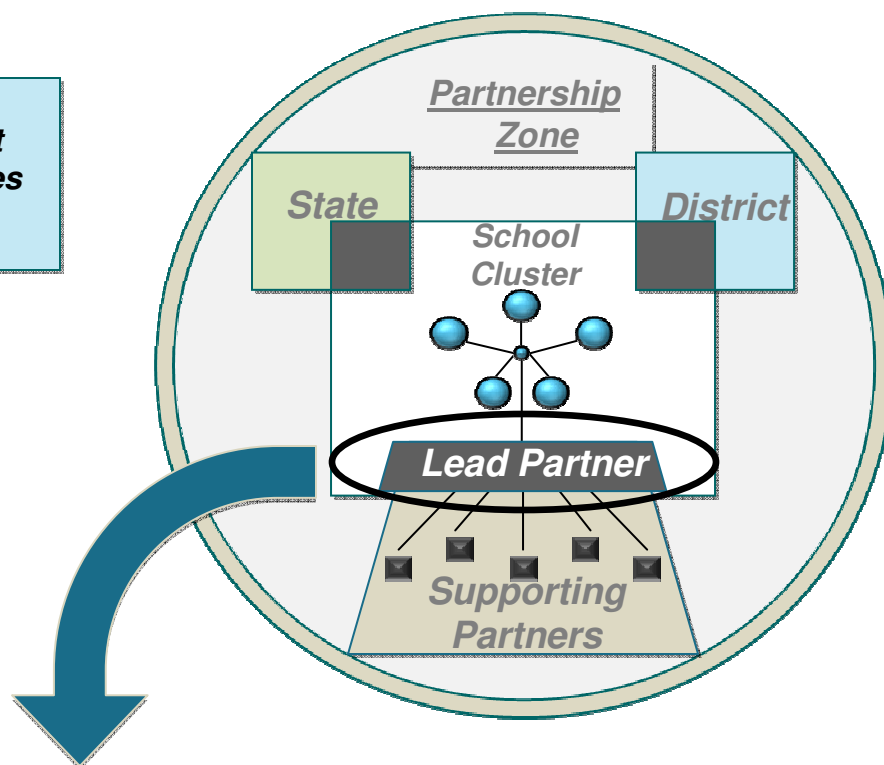


Lead Turnaround Partners serve as a key reform to increase capacity and create coherent support

***“Old World” Intervention Capacity & Roles:
Fragmented, Competing Improvement Projects***



***Partnership Zones:
High-capacity Lead Partners to align programs***



Currently “project-itis” results in a plethora of partners, who can get in the way of schools channeling energy into coherent, radical transformation. Lead Turnaround Partners coordinate the work of all partners so overstretched principals don’t have to.

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Lead Partners align authority with accountability for school clusters

*Lead Partners are **non-profit organizations** or **units of central offices** on contract with the central office or states for small clusters of 3-5 schools.*

Responsibilities of a Lead Partner

- **Sign a 3-5 year performance contract for student achievement with the district or state;** the agreement assigns the Lead Partner responsibility for a small “intentional” cluster of schools where systems and programs will be aligned and holds the Lead Partner accountable for improving the student achievement
- **Assume authority for decision making on school staffing** (as well as time, money and program); in particular, the Lead Partner:
 - Hires a new principal or approves the current one
 - Supports the principal in hiring and replacing teachers and has responsibility for bringing in a meaningful cohort of new instructional staff
- **Provide core academic and student support services directly or aligns the services of other program and support partners,** who are on sub-contracts with the Lead Partner, and build internal capacity within the schools and by extension, the district
- **Has an embedded, consistent and intense relationship** with each school during the turnaround period (5 days per week)

Lead Partners add a hybrid option to the portfolio, combining district efficiencies and charter autonomies

Districts

- Economies of scale over key infrastructure (e.g. facilities, transportation)
- Mobility of students and teachers is facilitated by having common elements across the district
- Community credibility

Charter Management Organizations

- Autonomy over the core elements of a school:
 - People
 - Time
 - Money
 - Program
- School level accountability for student results



The Lead Turnaround Partner offers a new model for school reform, leveraging both the operational freedoms enjoyed by CMOs and the scale benefits of a district.

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Lead Partners can be cultivated from multiple sources

Value proposition to Lead Partners

- Start-up funds to enter new geographies and roles
- Opportunity to implement their models with fidelity as a result of conditions change
- Potential for rapid scale based on state-wide expansion of zone concept
- Likely leadership support
- Ability to leverage existing facilities and other district infrastructure



Attract national organizations that are not currently within state



Incubate new organizations that are designed to scale from the start



Support existing local school management organizations in going to scale



Encourage entry by organizations working in state in related areas that could effectively support schools



Develop central office units, with operating autonomy, dedicated to Lead Partner work

Ultimately, a diverse portfolio of Lead Partners can be developed

Potential source	Implied changes to existing model	Motivation to participate
Charter/school management organizations	Adapt their model to work within a district architecture	Access to facilities and other infrastructure, and ability to work in states without charter availability
Supporting partners (e.g. human capital, data, curriculum)	Ramp up their models to work more intensively and address a broader range of capacities	Desire to see their core approaches implemented with greater fidelity and depth within schools
Local funders (e.g. local education funds)	Move into the operating role by adjusting current structure or spinning off a new organization	Ability to leverage their expertise, resources, and local relationships to transform schools
Districts	Create a new internal Lead Partner unit on performance contract with District and bring in people with expertise in school turnaround	Capacity to accelerate the pace of school turnarounds by helping transition district into new role and building support within the system for reform
Unions	Develop a school model and process for assuming control	Opportunity to help shape the turnaround movement
Universities	Adjust their programs to incorporate turnaround and residency	Platform to demonstrate leadership and share expertise in addressing the most serious problem in education today
New start-ups	Raise the capital to build an operation capable of scaling	Access to a sustainable opportunity for growth created by public/private funds and national demand

CMOs cite some additional attractions to working within a district

The most attractive

Access to facilities

- “Is [sic] facilities an enticement? Yes. Oh my goodness yes. The hurdle that often proves to be the most discouraging and complex for aspiring charter school founders and operators is facility acquisition.”
- “I think your real play here is the facility. The world of charters is totally strapped for facilities.”
- “Definitely facilities are huge.”

Additional incentives

Receiving the same funding as traditional public schools

- “In some places, charter schools take a big haircut financially, so a big selling point could be avoiding that haircut.”

Outsourcing operational services to the district

- “One advantage is economies of scale – sharing busing, food, etc. – the things the district has already figured out.”
- “There might be districts where the services are quite good: student data management, compliance, etc.”

Opportunity to effect broad change

- “We’re starting to think of how to build more partnerships with school districts instead of being outside the major work of changing schools, because ultimately our goal is to change schools for all students.”

Reduction in time spent managing antagonistic relationships

- “Working in collaboration with the district would save the time and energy that you spend as a charter fighting with them.”

Note: All quotations are from executives at large scale CMOs.

A welcoming operating environment must be fostered to secure and support Lead Partners

Element	Description
Guarantee of autonomies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and/or district begins dialogue with political, union, and community leaders to build support • District assures potential Lead Partners that control over people, time, money, program in contract
Exemption from existing district rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States and districts agree to relinquish any right to impose interventions on the Lead Partner's partner schools during the turnaround period
A supportive political environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both privately and publicly professed support from key political leaders in district and state • Proactive and vocal support by district and state of Lead Partner's efforts throughout process whenever Lead Partner implements controversial changes
Enough time to achieve results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractual guarantee that Lead Partner will have the number of years requisite to building culture and implementing the model with fidelity
Generous financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Money is necessary, above and beyond the regular money it takes to start a school. That's not to be underestimated." (CMO) • "For us to be a Lead Partner, the money would have to be substantial, to take our eye away from our 10 years of exemplary results." (CMO)
Good facility securely lined up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If the district would give you the kids and the facility, that would be a dream." (CMO) • "Another of our conditions is around facilities. We prefer not to use an existing facility, because they tend to be very bad, but if they are going to use an existing facility, we want to be involved in the discussion around what that facility should look like." (CMO)
Enough preparation time to build buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Community support will be hard to get. Whoever it is would have to spend several months going out, knocking on doors, talking to church leaders, getting whoever we need to support it to support it. I've come to the conclusion that it's going to take a little time. Slower is probably better, and to put the burden of community support on folks who are doing the turning around." (CMO) • "We need a courtship period before committing to working with a someone, to check them out, to have them check us out, and we need face-to-face time. In turnaround, it's helping faculty and staff understand exactly what we'd do." (school design and support organization)

Sustainability of political support is key to building a Lead Partner market

- Real life experience has made potential Lead Partner organizations wary; political changes have repeatedly derailed school improvement efforts
 - “What assurances can be made that the winds of politics won’t end up blowing people out?...My experience is, when you do those partnerships and the original people who wanted to see it happen are no longer around, contracts don’t carry the day in those environments.” (CMO)
 - “Look at the work of [other CMO]. They had the district lined up, the union lined up, everything in place, but it fell apart. It wasn’t anyone’s fault. But they got a new political situation. You have very little political control within the district.” (CMO)
 - “I don’t know how practical this is given the challenges of school boards and superintendents rolling over...In San Francisco I’ve seen a lot of small school initiatives come and go while we’ve been able to remain because we chose to go the charter route. The question for me is, how do you build longer term sustainability for these Lead Partners so they can withstand changes in leadership and political wind shifting?” (CMO)
- But, there are some potential safeguards to protect the Lead Partner work
 - An ongoing effort to cultivate parental and community support can safeguard against a shifting political environment
 - An escape clause in the contract that assures the Lead Partner ability to change to charter status
- And, publicizing the pilot effort aggressively could convince those who are interested but wary to enter the market
 - “When you have a Lead Partner working according to best practices, I’d recommend using it as a proof of concept. Make the school visitable [sic], even in year one, so people can come see what you’re doing and get excited about it. I’d start arranging some high level visits starting in late October or November.” (school development organization)

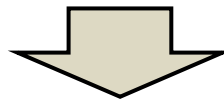


The most difficult Lead Partners to attract are likely to be the first ones.

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Ten key elements define the importance of a cluster and effective external and “central office unit” models

1. Clearly defined instructional framework, with flexibility around implementation and sharing of emerging best practices across the network
2. Control over hiring and investment in development of school leadership
3. Support for schools in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers
4. Investments in freeing principals from school operation responsibilities
5. Building of systems and strategies that enable the use of data to differentiate instruction and guide professional development
6. Development of a cultural model that supports learning and sets every student on the path to college
7. Network-wide extension of school day and year, with guidelines for how to align classroom time to the instructional model
8. Flexibility given to school leadership in use of budget with Lead Partner units supported through a defined fee
9. Defined approaches for conducting outreach to parents and community
10. Establishment of school structures for addressing social and behavioral needs of students

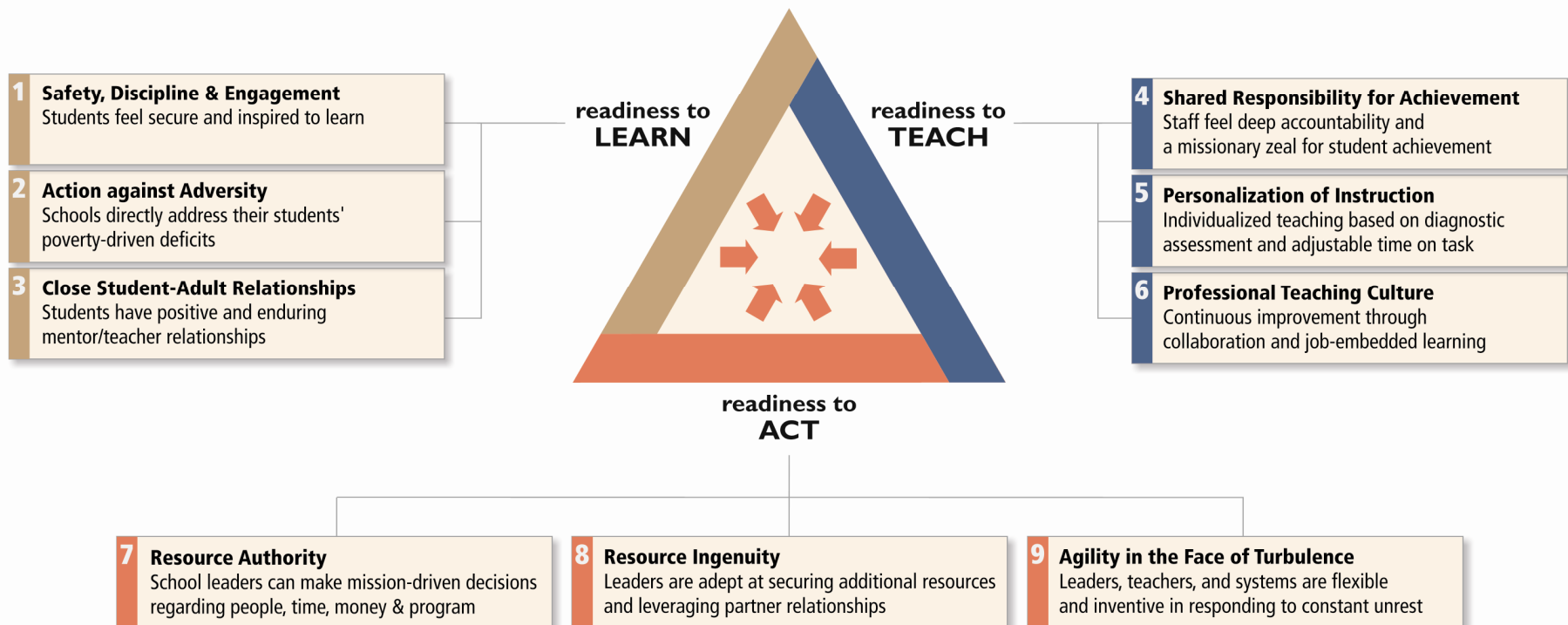


In Lead Partner selection, priority should be given to organizations whose models include these elements.

These cluster or network-level factors complement and facilitate the work being done at the school level

High Performance High Poverty schools demonstrate the following characteristics

HPHP READINESS MODEL



1. Clearly defined instructional framework, with flexibility around implementation and sharing emerging best practices

Leading networks set a clear framework but allow variation among implementation methods

- Network sets core curricula and provides instructional guidelines; schools within network may differ in implementation (e.g., instructional methodology, sequence, course scheduling)
- Sets a framework (e.g., each school must offer a reading intervention) and provides [common recommended behaviors]; schools within network may opt out of recommended practices provided they use a proven program and demonstrate strong results on benchmark and standardized exams
- Each director of a network develops curricula and guidelines for schools within his/her network to implement; schools are encouraged to be entrepreneurial and develop best practices
- “We say here’s the what, but not the how.”

Networks also recognize that encouraging innovation and sharing new best practices drives continual improvement

- “As we identify best practices for interventions for academic skills, like reading, we will have our school sites adopt that program.”
- “We are starting to write up more what are our pilots, how they are working, who is trying what and who is getting good results, and we put it up on our intranet to share...We walk a fine line between pushing curricula and allowing innovation to bubble up at the sites.”
- “Every year there are certain schools who don’t follow our recommended practices, and sometimes what they do gets better results, and then we adopt that as our new best practices that we provide to our schools.”

Note: All quotations and examples are from executives at large scale CMOs.

1. (cont.) Clearly defined instructional framework, with flexibility around implementation and sharing emerging best practices

Notably, though a clearly codified model is a common characteristic of leading networks, data suggest that widely variant types of models can be effective

- Expeditionary Learning Schools
 - Deliver curricula in the mode of “learning expeditions” - long-term investigations of subjects done through a particular lens (e.g., studying WWII through the eyes of Tuskegee airmen)
 - Use a dual grading system: academic performance and habits of work
 - Strongly promote adventure and fitness, including through Outward Bound trips
- International Baccalaureate model
 - Focuses on building international citizens, emphasizing characteristics like tolerance and requiring that schools offer a foreign language by the time students reach age 7
 - Mandates teacher preparation of IB “planners” for interdisciplinary lessons
 - Emphasizes deep student reflection over what they’ve learned, demonstrated in a final project
- New Tech Network schools
 - Are 100% project-based learning
 - Structure almost all classes as interdisciplinary, with two teachers with two classes in a single, double-sized classroom
 - Mandate one computer per student
- KIPP schools
 - Take a “drills and skills” approach, such as doing memorization drills to learn math
 - Use singing, chanting, and movement as instruction techniques
 - Have a school culture characterized by strict discipline (e.g., single file lines, silence in hallways)



The common thread is not which model is used, but the high level of clarity around the framework.

Note: All examples represent publicly available information.

2. Control over hiring and investment in development of school leadership

Ensuring that an effective principal is place is a fundamental role of networks

- “You have to have a strong principal. Where we’ve failed, or where our results have not been strong enough, it’s because the principals have not been strong enough.” (provider of comprehensive school program)
- “A great leader can turn a struggling school into an exemplary one, and a fair to mediocre leader can crush the hopes of a school truly driving student achievement.” (CMO)
- “Great schools require great school leaders.” (CMO)

Reflecting the importance of good principals, CMOs exercise great care in selecting principals and tend to choose people they know

- “Our best principals we grow from within . . .our best principals are teachers who stayed with us for a long time.” (CMO)
- “We tend to get our principals from our teachers, or other schools we know well. A lot of internal pipeline, or sister-friend school. We have leveraged [another CMO’s] principal training program, but last year we developed our own program for instructional and operating leaders.” (CMO)
- “The likelihood of successful replication will be significantly enhanced if school leaders are developed from within the organization.” (CMO)

Also fundamental is significant investment in high-touch professional development for principals

- “The [manager] of a network has weekly meetings with school leaders and speaks daily with them. [Managers] do one-on-one professional development.” (CMO)
- “SREB has a series of leadership curriculum modules. Incorporating the leadership training curriculum is an integral piece of our work.” (school design and support organization)
- “Our professional development for principals is monthly full day meetings, and we also have new principal boot camp, which is two days of intense training. And then we have [regional directors] who oversee about 9 principals each, at most, and they do one-on-one coaching.” (CMO)



Deep attention to recruitment, training, and retention of high quality leaders is of utmost importance.

3. Support for schools in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers

Centralized teacher recruitment reduces the operational burden on schools and leverages the central office's broader view of promising teacher pipelines

- Common practice is for central offices of CMOs to recruit teachers for their schools, and principals to hire from the pool of candidates identified and vetted by the central offices

Considerable ongoing expenditure of time and resources on professional development is a critical element to a successful model

- “There’s initial investment that has to be done in professional development, for teachers to do collaborative work before the new school launch...We also put a coach whom we’ve trained carefully in each of the schools that we work with. They do coaching in the classroom, how to internationalize the curriculum, how to bring to bear what we know about literacy, etc.” (school design and support organization)
- “We build additional professional development days into the calendar, either built into the school day or over the summer. We have asked for contract extensions for this, or for districts to pay beyond contract.” (school design and support organization)
- “We have summer orientation for teachers, weekly professional development for teachers throughout the year, and an annual master teacher retreat. There is also some professional development done at night.” (CMO)
- “Teachers need to do a tremendous amount of training and professional development to get the skills to lead project-based learning. We supply a three and a half year set of services” (school design and support organization)

“Teachers are more important than curricula...The number one predictor of student achievement is teacher quality.”

- Charter management organization

4. Investments in freeing principals from school operation responsibilities

Networks focus on removing operational concerns from principals to allow them to focus on instruction

- “We try to take everything but on-the-ground instruction off of the school site: things like monitoring attendance, accounts receivable and payable, IT...Generally the schools are thankful.” (CMO)
- “Too often, school leaders get bogged down by disciplinary, administrative, operational, and/or political issues...At less successful schools, leaders spend less than one-quarter of their time on student learning, teacher professional development, and school culture. Leaders at more effective schools dedicate more than half of the day to these high-value activities.” (Bridgespan case study)
- “The bottom line is to focus on student learning. Everything you do should revolve around that.” (CMO)

Networks invest in building systems that support principals in addressing back-office issues

- The home office “presents schools with overwhelming value and a powerful array of services” including facilities management and financing, budgeting/financial guidance/back office/payroll/purchasing, fund development, technology, inspections, reporting, special education management, and legal services. (CMO)
- “We do the entire back office area – all the stuff that’s not mission critical to instruction. It can take a lot of time for schools to figure this out on their own, and it takes focus away from the principals and coaches.” (CMO)



One of the primary ways in which the central office adds value to its network is by providing all of the back office functions, which enables principals to focus on instruction.

5. Building of systems and strategies that enable use of data to differentiate instruction and guide professional development

Establishment of data systems that allow for timely access throughout the year

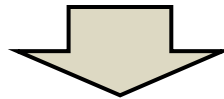
- “[We] recently launched [our] web-based interim assessment platform which gives teachers access to student performance data in real time.” (CMO)
- The VP of Technology in [our] central office “plans, organizes, and coordinates information systems and technologies to support all instructional, student services, and administrative programs,” develops and implements new technology, including that related to instructional delivery, and manages data acquisition and reporting systems

Training of teachers on how to use data to differentiate instruction

- CMO example: Dedicates five professional development days per year to the analysis of data
- “Personnel at the system and school levels who can assist teachers in the use of these systems are also critical” (“Acting on Data” study, commissioned by NewSchools)

Use of data by network leaders to differentiate their support of principals, to identify struggling programs, and to trigger interventions at an early stage

- “Teachers use data from interim assessments to determine the best strategies to help all students succeed.” (CMO)
- Include early warning systems at the middle school level
- “Data from multiple assessments are systematically used by teachers, students, and parents in an inquiry process that informs teacher practice and student learning.” (CMO)
- CMO example: Accountability system defines quarterly and annual performance targets, as well as the period of time that a school or teacher can under-perform before the central office will intervene with supports and/or take away a school’s local control.
 - “We retain [a common set of recommended behaviors], and you are allowed to use them or not use them, but you lose that autonomy pretty quickly if you are not getting results. We want to leave room for entrepreneurship but tighten up the consequences around it. The reality is that if things aren’t going your way, you have to go back to recommended practices.”



Every network should supply the infrastructure and tools needed for data-driven instruction, and an intervention strategy to address any areas of low performance uncovered by the data. Lead Partners may rely on the district for data systems if they are high quality.

6. Development of a cultural model that supports learning and sets every student on the path to college

Building a physical space that is conducive to learning

- CMO example: Renovates each school that it will be working in: “During the summer, the school's facility is renovated...Physical improvements may include new outdoor athletic facilities, paint, landscaping and science and computer labs, which signal to the community that the school is going to be a different place in the coming year.”
- “We think space is very important. We cannot work in bad facilities.” (CMO)

Taking the culture in the building seriously

- “Every adult in the school understands and is committed to ensuring that the school's culture and climate are orderly, safe, and conducive to learning. Culture and policies are determined on a school-by-school basis. They may include things such as uniform requirements, requiring the students to assemble in straight lines before entering the building at the start of each school day, not allowing students to be in the halls without adult supervision, not allowing cell phones, gum chewing, etc. The school's policies and procedures are consistently applied and the students adapt to the changes very quickly. Adults at [our] schools know that “letting things slide” does students a disservice.” (CMO)
- “In our school, everyone wears uniforms, and every school has morning assemblies to build culture, to do shout-outs, to recognize what’s been good, to talk about what’s not working.” (CMO)
- “The staff responds to every sign of disorder, however slight. The result: Even in the lunchroom, students talk quietly and need the supervision of only one staff member. All [our] schools share this obsessive commitment to extraordinarily high student behavior, using [common principles] to ensure that every student is meeting [our] standards.” (CMO)

6. (cont.) Development of a cultural model that supports learning and sets every student on the path to college

Instilling a college-going focus, through:

- **Academic requirements and opportunities**
 - All students must follow a curricular program that qualifies them for entry into the local university system
 - Acceptance to a four-year college is a requirement for high school graduation
 - Students can earn up an Associate's degree or two-years of college credit toward a Bachelor's degree, tuition free, while still in high school
- **Outreach to parents**
 - College preparatory program provides extended support and mentoring for students and their families, including college and financial aid counseling
 - School holds meetings with parents to cover topics such as College Costs, Saving for College, Types of Financial Aid, College Counselors, and How We Can Help You
- **Deliberate creation of a college-going culture**
 - “One of our cultural expectations is ‘college for certain.’ For example, we have college flags in our hallways and every school named after a university.”
 - Elements of the CMO program include field trips to colleges, speakers who come to the schools to talk about college, and assignments for students to conduct research papers on colleges
 - “We work with them from a young age on a college-going environment. For example, in 8th grade, we give students a test that tries to get them to express what careers they might be interested in, and then we talk to them about how going to college supports that, and what courses they need to get college ready.”



Making careful decisions and building support structures around culture are critical to driving high performance.

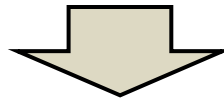
Note: All quotations and examples are from CMOs or comprehensive school programs.

7. Network-wide extension of school day and year, with guidelines for aligning classroom time to the instructional model

Extended school day and year are key features of almost every CMO's model

Freedom to schedule which courses happen, and when, is critical

- “[We] say double up on math and science and take out electives, as many as possible...For us, freedom to change schedule is a non-negotiable.” (CMO)
- “To succeed, you need to redesign time, to create time in the year for adults to work together in the way they need to, and to create a schedule for students to get the interventions and supports that they need.” (school design organization)
- “We need to be able to implement schedule changes that we need, like getting kids to take math every day as opposed to every other day.” (school support organization)
- “We’re married to our 4x4 curriculum. It’s like college semesters, with four blocks in the school day, two of which are math and English, and the other two vary.” (school reform model)



Greater flexibility around the use of time is a hallmark of successful networks

8. Flexibility given to school leadership in use of budget with Lead Partner units supported through a defined fee

Awarding schools control over their own budget greatly increases each school's capacity to be efficient and responsive to the specific environment in which it works

- “Our schools use the majority of their resources for staffing and then have autonomy over where they target their flexible resources.” (CMO)
- “Principals must have control over the things that really matter, including budget, to be able to make the decisions necessary to ensure that every child achieves at extremely high levels.” (CMO)

CMOs set fixed fees for schools in their network to cover the back office work provided by the central office, thus setting a predictable amount that schools budget to cover operations

- “Each school keeps 94 cents of every dollar of public funds allocated to it. The remaining 6% is paid to the [central office] as a management fee for providing back-office support functions.” (CMO)
- “The individual schools in [our] network are legally independent, thus administering their own budgets, and pay a management fee to the home office, as specified in the contract between the school and home office.” (CMO)



By providing schools the autonomy to use most of their budget, networks increase the capacities of schools to improve student learning while sustaining the core central office functions.

9. Defined approaches for conducting outreach to parents and community

Successful models have a deliberate process for increasing parent participation in their children's education

- “[We are] committed to actively integrating parents/guardians into all aspects of their students’ education experiences. Parents are required to give at least 35 hours of service annually at all [our] schools...Education programs are provided to new parents to help them learn the best ways to support their children’s educations.” (CMO)
- “One of the three main strategies of our framework is family advocacy – training and support where teachers work very closely with students and their families.” (school reform model)
- “We emphasize quality guidance and advisement, which includes connecting parents in a meaningful way.” (school design and support organization)
- “Parents can be a big ally in the school reform process . . . we started out in all cases with our own parent training program...Parents we’ve trained have ended up setting up monthly meetings with the principal, tackling the issue of truancy, working on how the school is viewed in the community...” (school support organization)
- “We go door to door knocking on the doors, talking to parents about college for their kids, and ask them to sign an agreement around that. We have workshops for parents to help them understand college application, and we have social workers do things like, if parents are out of work, we help them get to a food bank.” (comprehensive school program)

9. (cont.) Defined approaches for conducting outreach to parents and community

A concerted, ongoing, and in-person effort to build trust and credibility with the community is also necessary

- “A school is imbedded in a community and its political environment, so it’s unrealistic to think you can come in and change it without working with the community...The school is a public service; it’s for the community. It goes without saying that you have to talk to them.” (philanthropic organization)
- “We develop the capacity of a district or CMO to implement our model. They have to meet with the community and put on a show to demonstrate to us that they have the commitment of their mayor, their civic board, their teachers, etc. We don’t commit to working with them after this phase unless we see that the community commitment is in place.” (school design and support organization)
- “One thing we learned the hard way is to do some baseline work of getting the message out...If the community is not on board, you’ll have a huge mess on your hands, no matter what has been worked out with the school and the district. I’d say the biggest barrier to success is community engagement, just because I’ve seen it shut down an entire system.” (philanthropic organization)



Significant investment of time and energy in connecting to parents and community is another key driver of success.

10. Establishment of school structures for addressing social and behavioral needs of students

In developing models for student learning, it is critical to build structures for social and behavioral as well as instructional supports

- “You can address the school restructuring and changing the curriculum, which is going to help to a large degree, but until people address the issues kids are having that do not allow them to be successful, you won’t succeed.” (school consortium)
- “A meaningful percentage of students in underperforming schools are in need of treatment for unaddressed mental health, emotional, or behavioral problems, impeding their own learning and causing them to disrupt the learning of others...Our team creates in-school systems to address the conditions that students and teachers face daily, to help youngsters receive the mental health care they need, and to promote conditions of learning, both environmentally and individually within the child.” (school support organization)
- “Our instructional program focuses on intellectual, social, and emotional development...Throughout their four years of high school, students work with a consistent team of teachers and a counselor...[This] creates strong, long-term connections between students and their teachers and counselor, and ensures that the support network is engaged and knowledgeable.” (school design and support organization)
- “We require a teacher-student relationship so that all students are cared for by an adult in the school. We have a ‘crew structure’: each leader has a multi-year relationship with the students in his/her crew. Our students come from a wide array of backgrounds and many struggle with various challenges, so social supports are key to helping them succeed.” (school design and support organization)

Networks also establish connections to outside organizations who can provide additional services to students and families requiring more intensive supports

- “If parents are out of work, we help them get to a food bank. Whatever it is, we work with them, so students can stay in school.” (comprehensive school program)
- “One of our primary mechanisms for changes is development of in-school and external capacity to provide services to high and moderate-need students.” (school support organization)



The psychosocial barriers to learning are particularly prevalent in high-poverty areas, and thus addressing them will be integral to any strategy to help failing schools.

The following individuals and organizations were interviewed as part of this report

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The report 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.

For more information on The Turnaround Challenge and our Partnership Zone Initiative, please visit our website at www.massinsight.org or contact us at turnaround@massinsight.org.