FOUR DOMAINS FOR RAPID SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd

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About the Center on School Turnaround (CST). The CST is one of 7 national Content Centers in a federal network of 22 Comprehensive Centers. The U.S. Department of Education charges the centers with building the capacity of state education agencies (SEAs) to assist districts and schools in meeting student achievement goals. The goal of the CST is to provide technical assistance and to identify, synthesize, and disseminate research-based practices and emerging promising practices that will lead to the increased capacity of SEAs to support districts in turning around their lowest-performing schools.

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Introduction

Struggling schools, along with the many local and state efforts to improve them, are nothing new. But the challenge to make dramatic and sustainable improvements in our lowest performing preK-12 schools first gained national attention in 2001 with the advent of No Child Left Behind and its restructuring mandate. In 2009, the Obama administration then extended that challenge, making rapid and significant school improvement, commonly referred to as school turnaround, a top priority under the U.S. Department of Education's School Improvement Program and its Elementary and Secondary Education Act waivers. Yet despite a continued and intense local, state, and federal focus on turnaround over the past 15 years, improvement efforts have yielded mixed results, with individual turnaround schools appearing as islands of excellence in a sea of otherwise frustrated expectations.

What educators and policymakers have learned during this period of intense focus on turnaround is that the always-challenging endeavor of significantly improving the performance of individual schools is most likely to be successful when receiving support from beyond the individual school and its community. Rapid improvement can be bolstered or stalled by the system within which a school operates, a system that, in addition to the school itself, encompasses the state education department and the local district. To the extent that this broader system — state, district, school — is recast to actively support dramatic school improvement across the board, it will allow us to progress beyond the current state of having islands of excellence to a point where all schools are able to provide all students with the education they deserve.

To support educators in creating such systems, the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd (CST) has developed a framework to assist states, districts, and schools in leading and managing rapid improvement efforts. The framework shares, in practical language, the critical practices of successful school turnaround in four domains, or areas of focus, that research and experience suggest are central to rapid and significant improvement: turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift. At a more fine-grained level, the framework then offers examples of how each practice would be put into action at each level of the system.

The framework was created by a CST task force, with input from CST's leadership team as well as from members of the Network of State Turnaround and Improvement Leaders (NSTIL) Advisory Council, which includes SEA personnel from across the country who are responsible for school turnaround in their respective state. The framework is based on what has been learned from the research on turnaround, including lessons from improvement work under NCLB and promising practices from among the SIG efforts, as well as from the experience of CST's turnaround experts and partners. (For more information about the underlying methods, see the appendix.)

When conscientiously and collectively put into action, the practices identified within the domains may lead to progress across those areas. Implemented effectively, the practices in the framework should not only help students assigned to failing schools, but, by creating a system that better supports students in these schools, should have a cascading effect that improves the ecosystem of all schools. The intended audience for this framework are SEA staff and district and school leaders.

The framework was drafted before the advent of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provisions explicitly requiring that interventions for the lowest performing schools meet one of the top three levels of evidence.[1] The framework is not intended to meet the highest ESSA evidence standards or to lay out a series of interventions; rather, its purpose is to organize and provide a framing for the field's learnings about rapid school improvement efforts and about how improvement decisions made at any level could have a lasting impact across every level of the system.

The framework reflects the understanding that local context and implementation influence the outcomes of any improvement initiative.[2] It further reflects lessons learned from the federal School Improvement Grants program:[3]

- a successful school turnaround requires a systems approach with coherent guidance and support from the state and district to complement the actions of the school; and
- a successful school turnaround is more than the initial jolt of bold changes in structure, authority, and personnel; it includes phases in which effective practices and processes are routinized and sustained.

Furthermore, turnaround has proven to be hard work; it is not a linear process with defined steps that guarantee positive results. This framework should not be seen as a "magic bullet." As stated previously, context matters in terms of implementation and impact. Instead, this framework organizes the issues that state, district, and school leaders should consider when planning for a successful and sustainable turnaround. Decisions about what practices to implement when, and how, should take into account the particular needs and context of a turnaround effort.

The framework reflects the multifaceted and interrelated aspects of turnaround as currently understood; it will evolve as further research clarifies and affirms the components of a successful school turnaround.

The Framework: Responsibility at Each Level of the Education System

The domains and practices identified in the framework that follows apply across the system of the state education agency, the local education agency, and the school. As noted earlier, for each practice, the roles of the state, the district, and the school are briefly outlined, providing examples of their reciprocal roles in successful school improvement efforts. The domains are not meant to be considered in isolation, or to be approached in a step-by-step manner. The domains and practices overlap, with some consistent threads tying them together, including the need for clear goals and expectations, for tailored support, and for accountability to encourage a positive environment that is focused on improving student achievement in the lowest performing schools. Further, the practices are not provided in a suggested order of implementation. A turnaround plan should consider the most appropriate

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1 For the U.S. Department of Education's guidance on levels of evidence, see https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseseinvestment.pdf

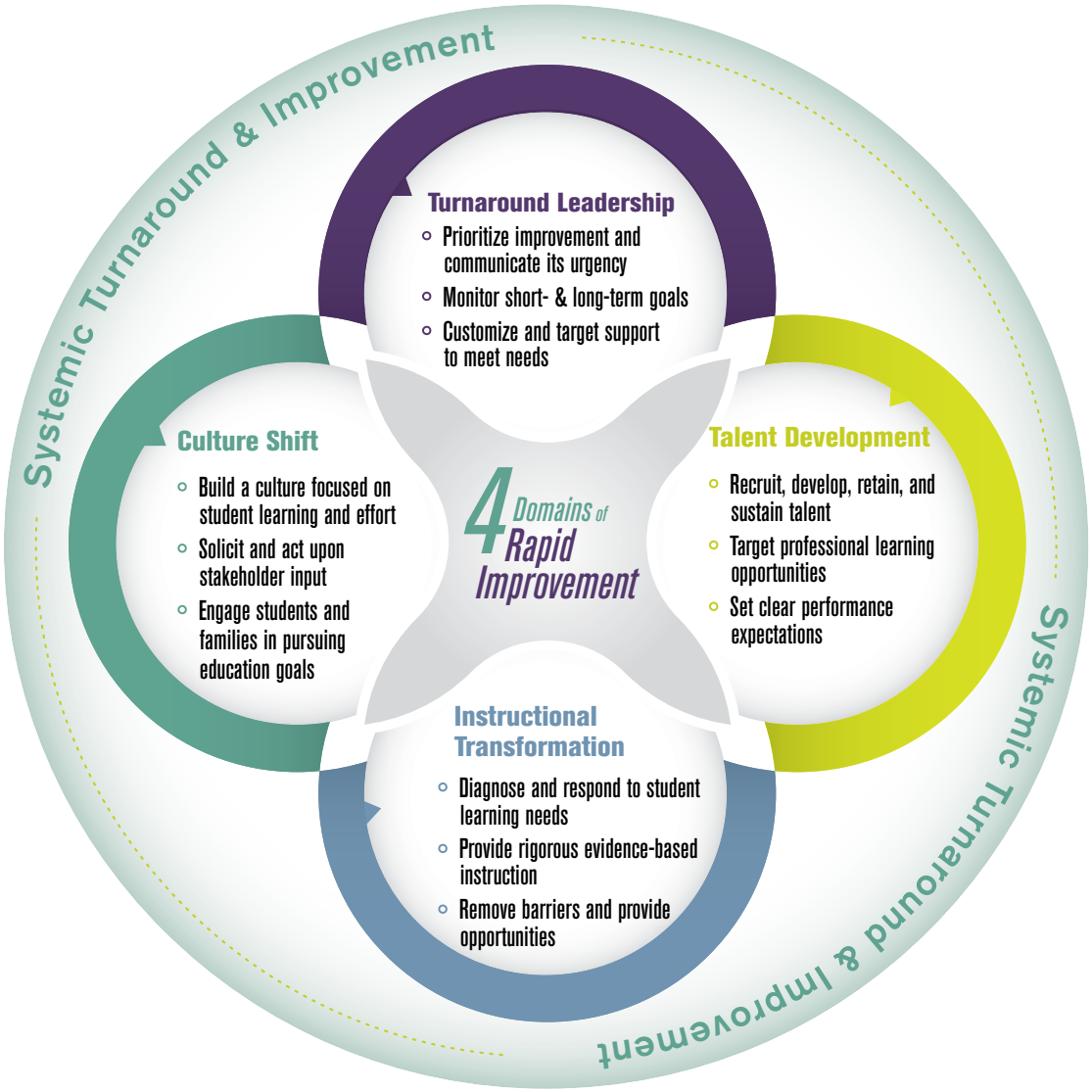
2 McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*(2), 171–178.

3 School Improvement Grants (SIG) were grants to state education agencies that were awarded as competitive subgrants to local education agencies to improve the lowest performing schools. SIGs are authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

prioritization of the implementation of practices. Ideally, many practices will be implemented simultaneously, but it would be difficult and even counterproductive to focus on too many areas or practices at once.

Figure 1, below, provides an overview of the framework, serving as an introduction to the four domains and the practices within each one. Following it are the descriptions of the domains and their practices.

Figure 1. Four domains of rapid improvement



Domain 1: Turnaround Leadership

Domain Descriptor: Turnaround leaders at the state, local district, and school levels drive initiatives to facilitate rapid, significant improvement for low-performing schools. Because the state education agency, districts, and schools function collectively as a system, leaders' initiatives at any one level of the system affect other levels.[4] At all levels in the system, leaders make it a priority to elevate the performance of low-achieving schools, and they communicate the urgent need for turnaround so that all students receive the high-quality education they deserve.[5] The policies, structures, resources, and personnel leaders put in place to rapidly and significantly improve the schools reflect the leaders' strong commitment to this work.[6] Turnaround leaders catalyze and organize the coordinated work of the staff charged with implementing efforts to rapidly improve schools, harnessing their efforts and drawing them to a shared vision of success.[7] Leaders at all levels understand their role in ensuring turnaround; they develop and execute data-informed turnaround plans that are customized to local needs to guide and monitor turnaround initiatives; and they accept responsibility for results.[8]

4 Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009; Player, Hitt, & Robinson, 2014; Zavadsky, 2013
5 Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008
6 Day, 2009; Hitt, 2015; Meyers & Hitt, 2017
7 Brady, 2003; Lane, Unger, & Souvanna, 2014
8 Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, & Duque, 2015

Practice 1A: Prioritize improvement and communicate its urgency

Practice Description:

- Set the strategic direction for turnaround, and establish clear policies, structures, and expectations for constituents to work toward ambitious improvement goals.[9]
- Articulate a commitment to turning around the lowest-performing schools and advocate fiercely across audiences for these schools.[10]
- Closely monitor, discuss, report, and act upon the progress of schools undertaking rapid improvement.[11]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:[12]

State. Establish an office or core cadre of personnel responsible for supporting policy, programmatic, and implementation efforts to lead turnaround initiatives. State leaders advocate the social and moral imperative of school turnaround through multiple public forums, leveraging communication and other strategies to garner parent and community support.

District. Identify a senior district official to lead a team that oversees local turnaround initiatives, including overseeing principal support and development, policy development, districtwide data analysis, and overall strategy direction. The superintendent articulates the need for turnaround, connecting the state's championing of it to local contexts and inviting local community members to further inform implementation efforts, policy, and resource distribution.

School. Develop leadership teams and, within the school staff, build leadership capacity for turnaround. Increasingly distribute leadership among faculty and staff to solidify commitment, increase collaboration, and provide faculty and staff with new challenges to keep them meaningfully engaged in the turnaround effort. Share turnaround priorities with students, faculty, and the school community, leveraging local media outlets to announce the school's commitment to change and to enlist parent and community partners in the effort.

9 Lane et al., 2014; Murphy, 2010; Player & Katz, 2016; Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008

10 Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene, Maynard, Redding, & Darwin, 2008; Rhim & Redding, 2014

11 Matthews & Sammons, 2004; Player, Kight, & Robinson, 2014

12 The roles noted in this framework are examples and are not meant to be an exhaustive list of the role of the state, district, and school in any given domain or practice area.

Practice 1B: Monitor short- and long-term goals

Practice Description:

- Develop goals informed by assessments of recent performance trends, and identify practices aimed at realizing a clearly articulated turnaround vision of significantly improved student learning.[13]
- Establish milestones for gauging progress. Continually update timelines and tasks to maintain the pace needed to accomplish meaningful goals quickly.[14]
- Respond to regular feedback on progress toward goal-directed milestones, and make timely changes in policy, programs, and personnel to get on track in achieving desired results for students.[15]
- Capitalize on initial turnaround successes and momentum to shift the focus from change itself to incorporating and establishing effective organizational processes, structures, and interactions that contribute to continuous organizational improvement.[16]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Create overarching expectations for improved student outcomes that are clearly articulated and measurable and that can be adapted for local contexts. Share clear expectations for high-performing schools, along with aspirational examples of such schools that have made rapid improvement.

District. Provide intensive, tiered support to principals and school leadership teams to help them develop action items, timelines, and responsibilities aligned with their school's turnaround plan. Provide access to data to inform goal-directed milestones, including markers for implementation, changes in professional practice, and interim and annual student assessments. Provide schools with resources, time, and concrete feedback to support them in refining and advancing their turnaround plan.

School. Develop and update the turnaround plan to ensure that it has clear short- and long-term goals. Monitor the progress of strategy implementation and make changes in personnel, programs, and methods as needed to keep the effort on track. Intervene swiftly if waning progress is detected.

13 Duke, 2015; Knudson, Shambaugh, & O'Day, 2011
14 Hanushek & Raymond, 2004; Strunk et al., 2015
15 Johnson & Asera, 1999; Player et al., 2014
16 Herman et al., 2008; Public Impact, 2007

Practice 1C: Customize and target support to meet needs

Practice Description:

- Provide customized, targeted, and timely support for turnaround efforts.[17]
- Align support to ensure coherence and integration with other necessary initiatives; eliminate unnecessary initiatives.[18]
- Regularly monitor progress to identify support needs and then act quickly and competently to address those needs.[19]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Conduct site visits to monitor plan implementation, and target district support based on identified priorities and progress. As an incentive to drive change, allow earned autonomy for local leaders in making key decisions. Share templates and tools to enable local leaders to make the best decisions. Provide professional learning activities for district and school leaders to establish and strengthen organizational leadership.

District. Provide tailored support to each school based on deep root-cause analysis and needs assessment to inform the school's priorities. Customize each school's level of autonomy for personnel hiring, placement, and replacement and other key decisions based on school capacity.

School. Identify the priority needs of the school, focusing on three to five immediate priorities. Request flexibility from established policies and/or procedures as justified by the data, turnaround plan, and school capacity.

17 Baroody, 2011; Player et al., 2014; Salmonowicz, 2009

18 Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Zavadsky, 2013

19 Herman et al., 2008; Hochbein, 2012; O'Day, 2002

Framework Self-Reflection for Domain 1: Turnaround Leadership

- What are your school turnaround goals?
- How do you define success regarding meeting school turnaround goals?
- What structure(s) or processes are in place to assess whether your efforts are successful? Who will be held accountable for creating timelines and updating the team regarding continuous progress?
- How will your progress on data-referenced goals be monitored, tracked, and communicated?
- What measures will be monitored to identify successes and challenges in student outcomes for school turnaround?
- Who will be held accountable at each level to monitor and report changes in student outcomes?
- Who will determine what interim assessments will be administered and analyzed?
- Who will be held accountable for analyzing and reporting the results of the interim assessments?
- How will the results of the interim assessments be reported to everyone involved?
- What tools, systems, and structures need to be established in order to give turnaround school leaders adequate decision-making authority and autonomy?
- How will you publicly advocate for your lowest-performing schools and your turnaround process? What steps need to be established for this advocacy process and who will be held accountable?
- What is your plan for engaging parents and other community stakeholders in your turnaround process?
- How do you define flexibility and how will you offer it to your turnaround leadership?
- What tools, systems, and structures are needed in order to provide flexibility to turnaround leadership?
- How will data be used to customize support for turnaround and improvement efforts?
- How will you consider the sustainability of improvement efforts from the start?

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Domain 2: Talent Development

Domain Descriptor: Turnaround requires competent and committed personnel at every level and in every position.[20] Policies and procedures to identify, select, place, retain, and sustain these personnel, especially teachers and school-level leaders, are a precursor to school turnaround,[21] and staffing of teachers and leaders for turnaround schools should be approached with equity in mind.[22] Turnaround competencies are identified and used to select and develop turnaround teachers, model teachers, and leaders.[23] At all levels, educators utilize and hone their instructional and transformational leadership to build capacity in those they supervise by continually balancing support with accountability.[24]

20 Berry, 2004; Crowther et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007

21 Herman et al., 2008; Guarino et al., 2006; Yatsko et al., 2015

22 Boyle et al., 2014; Trujillo & Renee, 2013

23 Steiner & Barrett, 2012; Steiner & Hassel, 2011

24 Grissom et al., 2013; Hallinger, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Orr et al., 2008; Yatsko et al., 2015

Practice 2A: Recruit, develop, retain, and sustain talent

Practice Descriptor:

- Proactively plan for recruiting and developing talent with turnaround-specific competencies to quickly fill the vacancies which will inevitably occur during the turnaround process.[25]
- Use multiple sources of data to match candidate skills and competencies to school needs, prioritizing the highest need schools.[26]
- Institute succession planning activities by creating in-house district preparation programs designed to foster and generate turnaround competencies to develop future turnaround leaders and teachers.[27]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Develop and disseminate human resources practices designed to identify, extend, and support turnaround competencies in leaders and teachers and train districts in the use of these practices. Offer turnaround preparation programs to support the development of aspiring school leaders.

District. Create a model for selection and placement of teachers and school leaders with turnaround competencies, ensuring that turnaround schools have preferential access to teaching candidates. Challenge and support human resources staff to design programs that identify and support the development of potential turnaround leaders and teachers. Develop multiple measures and data sources to closely analyze an individual's turnaround readiness and potential as a turnaround teacher or leader (e.g., observation of candidates over time in various settings).

School. Collaborate with the district to develop a school-specific competency model for turnaround teachers to discern which competencies should be prioritized in the teacher-selection process in this school. Utilize the district turnaround talent pool as the "go-to" source for hiring assistant principals and teachers. Encourage aspiring leaders to participate in turnaround preparation programs.

25 Berry, 2004; Crowther et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Guarino et al., 2006; Steiner & Barrett, 2012

26 Berry, 2004; Crowther et al., 2009; Steiner & Barrett, 2012; Steiner & Hassel, 2011

27 Berry, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Epstein et al., 2016; Parsley & Barton, 2015

Practice 2B: Target professional learning opportunities

Practice Description:

- Offer high-quality, individualized, and responsive professional learning opportunities designed to build the capacity needed for rapid school improvement.[28]
- Offer regular opportunities for job-embedded learning including coaching, mentoring, and observation (including peer observations).[29]
- Leverage and maximize the effectiveness of high-performing teachers, coaches, and leaders by using them as models and peer coaches.[30]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Provide training to districts on how to develop and implement a teacher professional learning model with individualization and job-embedded processes as the focus. Provide funding preference to professional learning opportunities that reflect these processes. Share examples of how districts and schools have implemented peer coaching, mentoring, and peer observation. Model a willingness to learn and grow. Ensure that development opportunities offered to districts model the formats and principles of effective professional learning.

District. Create timelines and other accountability systems that remind principals to regularly examine teacher performance and to rapidly adjust professional learning plans based on identified needs. Provide district staff with job-embedded professional learning and opportunities to learn side by side with school leaders. Ensure that district-offered professional learning experiences are differentiated, purposeful, targeted, and reflective of what is known about successful adult learning and the turnaround endeavor.

School. Create a cadre of instructional leaders (drawing from assistant principals, department coordinators, team leaders, and teachers with demonstrated instructional coaching capacity) who each respond to the professional learning needs of a manageable portion of the faculty and use data to identify those needs. Provide opportunities for leaders and teachers to learn side by side and share how their own ongoing growth impacts their individual practice as instructional and organizational leaders. Ensure that learning experiences are differentiated, purposeful, targeted, employed in rapid response to identified needs, reflective of what is known about effective adult learning, and clearly connected to the school's turnaround priorities.

28 Borko, 2004; Guskey, 1999; Huffman, 2003; Thompson et al., 2016

29 Aubuchon, 2013; Borko, 2004; Grissom et al., 2013; Huffman, 2003; Little, 1993

30 Darling-Hammond, 1999; Klem & Connell, 2004; Stronge et al., 2007; Wayne & Youngs, 2003

Practice 2C: Set clear performance expectations

Practice Description:

- Create and share expectations for a level of professional performance by every role in the system.[31]
- Develop and implement performance-management processes that include clear means for monitoring progress, flexibility to rapidly respond to professional learning needs, and opportunities to revise milestones as needed.[32]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Develop protocols to assist districts in analyzing role expectations and adapting those expectations to support school turnaround. Provide support and tools to help districts establish and monitor milestones.

District. Identify which district-level roles will contribute to school turnaround efforts; review and refine job expectations and descriptions to reflect realistic and high-leverage responsibilities to support rapid school improvement.

School. Define expectations for teachers, clearly and realistically considering how to effectively leverage teacher time and effort. Develop a daily and weekly schedule that reflects this priority of effective use of teacher time. When asking more of a teacher, consider removing another responsibility.

31 Anderson et al., 2014; Lynne Lane et al., 2013

32 Regan et al., 2015; Lynne Lane et al., 2013

Framework Self-Reflection for Domain 2: Talent Development

- Do you use turnaround competencies for the identification of teachers for low–performing schools? If so, what are the turnaround competencies for teachers in your context?
- Do you use turnaround competencies for the identification of principals for low-performing schools? If so, what are the turnaround competencies for leaders in your context?
- If you do not use competencies, how will you identify the skills and aptitudes needed for turnaround leaders and/or teachers? What resources are available?
- What tools, systems, and structures need to be established in order for leaders to maintain a balance of support with accountability at all levels? Do the tools, systems, and structures need to vary depending on the level (state, district, or school)?
- How will you develop a teacher and leader pipeline? What tools, systems, and structures need to be established in order to make this pipeline sustainable?
- Who will be responsible for identifying the hiring needs of turnaround schools?
- How will you create consensus and understanding of teacher placements and assignments? What will you use to match school needs with teacher and leader competencies?
- What are the professional learning needs of turnaround leadership and staff? What steps need to be accomplished to fulfill those needs?
- How will high-performing teachers be leveraged to expand their positive influence outside of just their own classrooms?
- Who will be responsible for providing and leading the professional learning opportunities and experiences for turnaround leadership and staff? How can you ensure that professional learning will be rapid, responsive, and customized?
- Who will be held accountable for setting clear performance expectations for staff? How will they determine those expectations? How will staff be assessed or held accountable for achieving those performance expectations?

References for Domain 2 and its Practices

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Domain 3: Instructional Transformation

Domain Descriptor: Improvement in student learning outcomes depends on system-wide support for change in the classroom instruction.[33] Effective instructional practice, including strong standards-based instruction,[34] data-based planning,[35] differentiation and individualization,[36] research-based pedagogical approaches,[37] and classroom management,[38] must be identified and supported at the school, district, and broader system level. Schools cultivate an environment of both high expectations and support for students' academic accomplishment.[39] While districts and schools strive to focus their organization's attention on the in-school factors impacting student performance, they also attempt to address factors that are traditionally non-school-based so that every student comes to the task of learning ready for the challenge.[40]

33 Herman et al., 2008; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009
34 Browder et al., 2006; Drake, 2007
35 Anderson et al., 2010; Hamilton et al., 2009; Love et al., 2008
36 Browder et al., 2006
37 Reigeluth, 2013
38 Allen et al., 2013; Weinstein et al., 2004
39 Adelman, 2006; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Moore & Emig, 2014
40 Walsh et al., 2014

Practice 3A: Diagnose and respond to student learning needs

Practice Description:

- Diagnose student learning needs and use identified needs to drive all instructional decisions.[41]
- Incorporate effective student supports and instructional interventions.[42]
- Use fluid, rapid assessment and adjustment of instructional grouping and delivery to adapt to student learning needs.[43]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Provide incentives around funding and support to LEAs and schools that target staffing improvements that ensure teachers have the time and capacity to diagnose and respond to each student's needs. Provide training on fluid instructional groupings.

District. Develop protocols to assist teachers in drilling down on individual student needs and creating instructional action plans aligned to those needs. Explore creative use of instructional time, which may include but not limited to, options for extended learning such as longer school days, weeks, or summer sessions to support each student's needs. In doing so, any additional instructional time should be structured and staffed to ensure high-quality learning will occur (rather than simply a perpetuation of ineffective practices). Ensure that data sources (e.g., benchmark assessments) exist for teachers to conduct frequent progress monitoring of student outcomes.

School. Regularly examine individual student data, carried out in team meetings, professional learning communities (PLCs), or in other planning sessions as part of teachers' regular work and expectations. Creatively use fluid instructional groupings rather than year-long assignments that may not meet students' (and teachers') needs. For example, when students struggle with a certain concept, they could be assigned temporarily to a teacher whose data demonstrate that he or she teaches it well or differently from the students' current teacher(s), placed in a small group for reteaching, or given individualized instruction. Teachers are given time within the school day to conduct such analysis and develop plans to address identified needs. Teachers are also held accountable for doing so and for carrying out the plans they develop for students.

41 Anderson et al., 2010; Lachat & Smith, 2006

42 Hamilton et al., 2009; Lachat & Smith, 2006; Love et al., 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2003

43 Hamilton et al., 2009; Klute et al., 2016; Love et al., 2008

Practice 3B: Provide rigorous evidence-based instruction

Practice Description:

- Set high academic standards and ensure access to rigorous standards-based curricula.[44]
- Provide supports to ensure evidence is used in instructional planning and facilitation of student learning.[45]
- As gaps are identified in the curriculum or instructional delivery, develop plans to strengthen these key components.[46]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Provide district-level leaders with professional learning on state standards that enables them, in turn, to plan and provide learning opportunities that bolster teacher content knowledge when needed. Provide guidance on using evidence to select curricular and instructional supports.

District. Work with schools' instructional leadership teams to refresh, update, and bolster teachers' content knowledge through ongoing professional learning opportunities on rigorous evidence-based instruction. Coordinate vertical alignment such that teachers have an understanding of what their students should have learned the prior year, before entering their classroom, and what their students will be expected to learn the following year. Examine curricular and instructional supports to ensure they are grounded in evidence, rigor, and the state standards.

School. Conduct a curriculum analysis and map lesson plans against standards to ensure the plans adequately represent the standards. Determine whether adjustments and supports are needed to ensure all students have access to the curricula. In each instructional mode utilized — whether whole class, small group, independent work, technology-based, or homework — teachers routinely utilize the best instructional practices for that mode and school leaders support their development of those practices.

44 Browder et al., 2006; Drake, 2007; Herman et al., 2008

45 Andrews & Goodson, 1980; Gustafson & Branch, 1997; Reigeluth, 2013

46 Drake, 2007; Herman et al., 2008

Practice 3C: Remove barriers and provide opportunities

Practice Description:

- Systematically identify barriers to student learning and opportunities to enhance learning opportunities for students who demonstrate early mastery.[47]
- Partner with community-based organizations, such as with health and wellness organizations, youth organizations, and other service providers, to support students in overcoming obstacles and developing the personal competencies that propel success in school and life.[48]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Support districts in developing early warning systems to identify students who may be falling behind, giving the school the opportunity for timely intervention. Identify and network with other state-level entities that could serve as partners for schools and districts. Create access to services that districts can tap into in order to meet students' needs that, if left unaddressed, can impede learning (e.g., health care, clothing, nutrition).

District. Identify and remove any artificial barriers (whether policies or practices) that stand in the way of every student having an opportunity to learn at higher levels. Identify the district's most prevalent non-academic barriers to student learning. Disseminate this information to principals, and during meetings with principal supervisors continually revisit how community resources can be leveraged creatively to meet students' basic needs.

School. Track student progress and help students regain lost ground through academic supports (e.g., tutoring, co-curricular activities, tiered interventions), extended learning opportunities (e.g., summer bridge programs, after-school and supplemental educational services, Saturday academies, enrichment programs), credit-recovery programs, and virtual courses. Give students demonstrating sufficient prior mastery access to higher-level assignments and courses. Network with nearby organizations in the community to identify available supports — or to generate new supports — for students. Consider having medical and dental services available on site on a regular basis. Provide on-site laundry service for families in need. Provide food for students during extend learning sessions and other periods when they are at school outside of regular school hours.

47 Cantor et al., 2010

48 Blank et al., 2009; Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2001; Vita, 2001; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Moore & Emig, 2014

Framework Self-Reflection for Domain 3: Instructional Transformation

- How will teachers diagnose each individual student's learning needs? What tools, systems, and structures need to be established?
- How could fluid grouping of students be implemented and supported?
- How will alignment of instruction with standards be facilitated?
- Identify possible barriers to student learning and how each level of the system can work to remove those academic and non-academic barriers in turnaround schools.
- How will teachers guide and track the progress of each student? What tools, systems, and structures need to be established?
- Who will establish these tools, systems, and structures?
- What learning benchmarks will teachers use in order to guide and track the progress of students?
- What types of early warning systems will identify students who may be falling behind? Who will be held accountable for establishing those early warning systems?
- What interventions are used to help students who are falling behind? How might those be adjusted or changed? Who will be included in the team to adjust or change those interventions?
- How can funds be leveraged by your schools to provide additional academic supports, extended learning opportunities, credit recovery programs, and virtual courses? Are there stakeholders who would be willing to financially support these programs?
- How do teachers challenge students that are exceeding their current level of schooling? What types of programs do your schools offer?
- What types of higher-level assessments and courses have your schools offered in the past and have they worked well to challenge gifted or advanced students? What can schools do differently to challenge gifted or advanced students?
- How do teachers give students authentic experiences, in order to connect their interests with real-world applications?
- How do your schools involve community members and stakeholders in offering internships, career exploration, and service learning opportunities? Who will be held accountable for helping make these connections for your students?

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Domain 4: Culture Shift

Domain Descriptor: A successful turnaround depends on many people working together to achieve extraordinary results.[49] Attaining the necessary level of commitment to achieve these results requires a dramatic culture shift toward both high academic expectations and concerted effort.[50] A turnaround culture fuses strong community cohesion with an academic press; one without the other is insufficient.[51] Leadership establishes the structures and opportunities for faculty and staff to work together around common goals, engendering a culture of mutual respect, shared responsibility, and focused attention on student learning.[52] State, district, and school leaders engage families to support their children's learning and the overall turnaround effort.[53] A strong school community attends to the culture both inside and outside the school,[54] gathering input from stakeholders and gauging perceptions about the school and the turnaround effort.[55] Students are challenged and supported to aim higher, work harder, and realize the satisfaction of accomplishment.[56] A positive school climate reflects a supportive and fulfilling environment, learning conditions that meet the needs of all students, people sure of their roles and relationships in student learning, and a culture that values trust, respect, and high expectations.[57]

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49 Lambert, 2002; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Michlin, & Mascall, 2010; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009

50 Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene, Maynard, Redding, & Darwin, 2008; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009

51 Epstein, 2001; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; McAlister, 2013

52 Herman et al., 2008; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009

53 Epstein & Sanders, 2000; McAlister, 2013

54 Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Louis, 2007

55 Brazer & Keller, 2006; Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011

56 Herman et al., 2008

57 Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005

Practice 4A: Build a strong community intensely focused on student learning

Practice Description:

- Celebrate successes — starting with quick wins early in the turnaround process — of students, family, teachers, and leaders. Early success promotes an expectation for further success and engenders confidence in the competence of colleagues.[58]
- Provide explicit expectations and support for each person's role (expected behaviors) both in the turnaround and in student progress.[59]
- Create opportunities for members of the school community to come together to discuss, explore, and reflect on student learning.[60]
- Champion high expectations (of self and others), embed them in everyday practice and language, and reinforce them through shared accountability and follow-through on strategies for dramatically improving student outcomes.[61]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Provide districts with tools for tracking, analyzing, and sharing data on school performance, professional practice, and student opportunities; share findings and exemplary practices across districts; set policies that require a demanding curriculum for all students.

District. Provide systems and structures to support collaborative district and school work such as dedicated time for reflection and collaboration. Align personnel evaluations with the role expectations for turnaround. Offer opportunities and avenues for sharing turnaround progress and successes.

School. Establish systems (i.e., structures, policies, procedures, and routines) for focused collaborative work; recognize student effort and academic mastery; recognize job satisfaction and camaraderie among staff as essential assets in a turnaround. Maintain a positive, encouraging classroom and school culture for students where students feel safe and supported to share their needs, struggles, and concerns. Recognize each incremental improvement but keep the focus on ultimate results at the student, teacher, and school levels. Celebrate team accomplishments and offer recognition for hard work and improvement. Frequently and openly review and discuss with stakeholders data on turnaround progress (including implementation and leading indicators).

58 Herman et al., 2008; Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009

59 Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009

60 Louis et al., 2010; Osborne-Lampkin, Folsom, & Herrington, 2015

61 Lambert, 2002; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009

Practice 4B: Solicit and act upon stakeholder input

Practice Description:

- Collective perceptions — held by school personnel, students, families, and the broader community — about the degree to which their school climate is or is not positive is gathered and used to gauge the climate-related work to be done by a school striving for turnaround.[62]
- Stakeholder perceptions are considered when identifying priorities and improving the underlying conditions that contribute to school climate issues.[63]
- Acknowledge and respond to constructive feedback, suggestions, and criticism.[64]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Provide instruments and protocols for conducting local perception surveys, forums, and focus groups to districts and schools; provide opportunities for parents and community members to provide feedback at state and local levels.

District. Administer a diagnostic instrument soliciting feedback from school personnel, families, students, and community members early in the turnaround process with periodic follow-up surveys to assess perceptions of the school and the turnaround effort; provide training for school leaders on assessing stakeholder perceptions and acting on what they learn.

School. Learn what constituents think by conducting surveys, forums, focus groups, and suggestion boxes. Share and act on what is learned. Take constituent input into account when making programmatic decisions. Consistently demonstrate that all voices are heard.

62 Redding et al., 2011; San Antonio & Gamage, 2007

63 Brazer & Keller, 2006; McAlister, 2013

64 Thapa, Cohen, Guffy, & Higgens-D'Alesandro, 2013; Smith, & Wohlstetter, 2001

Practice 4C: Engage students and families in pursuing education goals

Practice Description:

- Intentionally build students' personal competencies to pursue goals, persist with tasks, appraise their progress, hone learning strategies, and direct their own learning to further enhance their capacity to learn and succeed.[65]
- Provide students with opportunities to connect their learning in school with their interests and aspirations.[66]
- Meaningfully engage parents in their child's learning, progress, interests, and long-term goals.[67]

Examples of How Different Levels of the System Can Enact This Practice:

State. Require evidence of direct linkage between family and community engagement and student outcomes in turnaround and improvement plans and reports; provide training and resources on family and community engagement; provide professional learning on student goal setting, self-regulation of learning, and family engagement in the student's progress.

District. Provide resources for sharing assessments, interest inventories, and career and college information with students and families; provide planning templates for students to plan coursework and college and career pathways; provide line items in the school budget for resources related to family engagement for the specific purpose of supporting student learning; include information about the school's data-supported progress with family engagement in monthly board reports; set aside time and provide structures for parent groups focused on improved student learning.

School. Programmatically and systematically build students' skills in setting learning goals, managing their learning, and pursuing their goals by charting progress on coursework and towards their postsecondary goals; inform and engage families in planning and supporting their students' education goals; provide students and their families with a full explanation of assessment results and interest inventories to help them make the best decisions; tap community resources and expertise to expand students' understanding of potential careers and education options.

65 Kaplan & Midgley, 1997; Redding, 2014

66 Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009

67 Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; McAlister, 2013; Sanders, 2001

Framework Self-Reflection for Domain 4: Culture Shift

- How will you work with your turnaround school leaders and teachers to acknowledge and include their ideas in creating a culture that values effort, respect, and academic achievement?
- How will you invite parents and community members to engage in meaningful dialogue? How will you include their ideas in your process for creating a culture that values effort, respect, and academic achievement?
- How will you include members of the community in your turnaround efforts? How will you encourage them to participate in the turnaround process?
- How will you communicate the progress of your turnaround efforts? Who will be held accountable for this communication at each level? How will the path be made clear to everyone?
- How will you solicit input from stakeholders regarding their perceptions about your schools? What tools need to be created in order to solicit that input? Who will be held accountable in developing and distributing those tools?
- What will you need to do to adjust perceptions about your turnaround schools, if negative, from your stakeholders? How will you show them your turnaround school progress?
- How will you share assessment results explanations with your families? What will need to be in place to ensure that all families have access to this information? How will you assist families in educational planning?

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Conclusion

This framework acknowledges two important understandings about school turnaround — that local context and implementation influence the outcome of any improvement undertaking and that no single strategy alone can yield the scale and scope of improvement that is needed.

Grounded in turnaround and improvement research, and drawing from the experience of a wide range of contributors, the framework offers a set of practices, with related examples, in each of four domains, or areas of focus, that, together, describe a systemic approach to rapid, significant, and sustainable school improvement. The goal is to promote the use and routinization of effective practices so they become part of the culture at all levels of the endeavor to dramatically improve low-performing schools.

To the extent that educators at the state, district and school level are able to implement these practices in a contextualized fashion, a state's education ecosystem is strengthened, with the system bolstering rather than hindering school improvement efforts. In this increasingly supportive ecosystem, dramatic improvement is no longer manifested in "islands of excellence." Instead, these routinized practices positively affect low-performing schools across the board, making excellence the norm rather than the exception. Through these practices, systemic improvement becomes "the way we do business" at the state, district, and school levels.

The framework is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of activities within each practice or even of all practices. Instead, it offers examples, considerations, and practical applications of what it takes to successfully lead systemic efforts to achieve dramatic school turnaround. It is important to emphasize that none of the four domains identified in the framework — turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift — should be considered in isolation. The domains outlined in the framework are designed to focus practices and policies that improve the quality of teaching and learning, improve and develop competent turnaround leadership, and engage schools' communities, students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in the implementation of strategic turnaround efforts. As such, each domain and its practices is an integral part of turnaround efforts, building on and from the others. Taken together, the domains provide a comprehensive view of the work needed for turnaround. Ultimately, systemic improvement efforts require a dramatic transformation in how the state, district, and school attend to each domain and implement its critical practices with the aim of achieving successful and sustainable turnaround.

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Domain 1: Turnaround Leadership

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Appendix: Project Methods

The seeds for this framework were planted in a discussion among members of the Center on School Turnaround (CST) Leadership Team that was focused on what they had learned from the field about rapid school improvement efforts in the years since CST's inception. But after initially focusing on promising efforts, the team decided that a more worthwhile endeavor would be to distill what is known about rapid school improvement from both research and practice, and to examine that knowledge through a systems lens. The aim was to develop a framework for how dramatic school improvement can be mutually fostered, supported, and extended by those at each level of the education system: school, district, and state.

This year-long process began with a five-person CST task force examining the literature about what works in systemic school improvement efforts and school turnaround. That initial review looked at available research on effective school leadership, turnaround leadership in education, sustained turnaround leadership in non-education sectors (e.g., the business sector), effective instruction in schools, professional development, and community/stakeholder engagement. The task force then discussed its findings with a larger CST team. Working from what the task force found in its initial broad research review, members of the two groups opted to narrow the focus of the research review, merging some of the closely aligned topic areas to come up with fewer topics worthy of further exploration.

Individual task force members were then responsible for conducting a deeper review of the research in what eventually became the four domains of the framework, looking at a finer level for both improvement-related practices and indicators of success. Task force members then shared their findings with each other. Given what they were learning about the commonalities within the language across the bodies of literature, the group began to frame the four domains to highlight how the domains and the practices within them would play out at each level of the education system — state, district, and school. The task force pulled from the collective field-based expertise within the larger CST team to further tease out each identified practice, seeking examples of what these practices would look like in action: If something needed to happen at one level of the education system, what supportive actions would be needed at the other levels?

To test the emerging framework of domains, practices, and examples, the CST task force then sought input from CST's leadership team, as well as from members of the Network of State Turnaround and Improvement Leaders (NSTIL) Advisory Council, which includes SEA personnel from 13 states across the country who have responsibility for school turnaround in their respective state. This feedback was used to further develop the level-specific examples of practice outlined in the framework.

FOUR DOMAINS FOR RAPID SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK