

SCHOOL TURNAROUND CORE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

School Turnaround is an intensive 3.5-year intervention and leadership development initiative that helps principals turn around failing or underperforming schools. The initiative is designed specifically for schools and districts where someone in power perceives a current failure that requires urgent intervention. While most educational initiatives geared toward demonstrating student achievement take place over a long time period, School Turnaround is proven to bring about urgency and time-compressed change in as little as one year.

PHASE ONE: TURNAROUND READINESS AND PREPARATION (Spring prior to Core Turnaround Implementation)

Before beginning any training or consulting, School Turnaround staff undertake initial research in the form of data analysis and conversations with the principal, superintendent, and district staff. This allows School Turnaround to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of the district and its schools so that none of the work to follow is generic or “one size fits all.”

These visits include:

- Assessment of the principals using Readiness criteria
- Work with district leadership and personnel to understand strengths and challenges in areas of data analysis, assessment, curriculum, professional development, human resources, and leadership pipeline
- Analysis of environment, school structures, teaching and learning strengths and challenges, community and family engagement, and leadership team
- District Turnaround Orientation to district leadership and key staff on Turnaround Strategies and Framework to prepare key personnel for support of turnaround principal
- One-day training on establishing a district results framework with senior leadership and board members. Follow-up support for board members and superintendent as requested

PHASE TWO: CORE TURNAROUND IMPLEMENTATION (Year 1 and 2)

Turnaround Training (Summer prior to Year 1)

Participating principals attend this conference with two or three key staff members from their schools. These “turnaround teams” receive training on the six characteristics of successful turnaround leaders and the six key strategies for turnaround. These strategies are immediately applied to schools by each school team in the form of a Turnaround Design. Teams leave the conference with a set of achievement targets, a new message for their schools, and a pragmatic course of action based on proven strategies for immediate and incisive change.

Implementation (Year 1: August – June; Year 2: August – June)

Each school's leadership team is assisted, supported, and challenged by a Turnaround Specialist. This partnership is the foundation of our work with schools. Each Turnaround Specialist is carefully selected based on having turned around a failing school or district and an ability to help others do the same. Principals and Turnaround Specialists engage regularly through site visits, e-mail and phone communication. Unlike traditional mentoring programs, Turnaround Specialists maintain a low profile. Turnaround Specialists are clear that their feedback is important but that ultimately it is the principal and his or her team who will make the turnaround a success.

During implementation at the school(s), School Turnaround also works with the district to assure that school-based approach to assessment results in daily use of data at the class and student level toward hitting established targets and will provide facilitation and support at quarterly board work sessions or retreats for the turnaround strategy. Depending on the needs of the district, School Turnaround may also provide supports such as training of principal supervisors in turnaround coaching and support, developing and implementing a standards-based curriculum and/or work with district leadership to establish an internal leadership pipeline.

Mid-Year Conference (January, Year 1 and Year 2)

Principals convene at a mid-year conference to share strategies and persistent challenges in an effort to course correct before high-stakes testing occurs. Facilitated conversation and presentation among the principals lends itself to useful problem-solving and a clear path forward for getting results in the second semester.

Assessment and Learning (June, Year 1 and Year 2)

At the end of the first year, participants attend a conference where they assess their initial targets and determine how well the results have met or exceeded them. Turnaround Specialists and other School Turnaround staff assist leaders in looking carefully at this information. From the lessons learned, principals create a design for the next year that will continue the upward trajectory of academic achievement.

PHASE THREE: DURABILITY AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP (YEAR 3)

Upon successful completion of the Turnaround program, principals will shift focus to expanding leadership within the school, deepening the turnaround approach in long-term durable strategies, and introducing innovation. This will be facilitated in monthly cohort meetings, professional development webinars, and continued access to Turnaround specialists. School Turnaround will work with district-level leaders to assure sustainability and durability of student success and school capacity by developing and instituting strong transition and succession protocols and leveraging the pipeline of incoming and readiness level leaders.