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The Economic Stimulus: School Improvement Grants

Expert Presenters:

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An on-demand archive of this webinar will be available at www.edweek.org/go/webinar in less than 24hrs.
Leveraging federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) to advance systemic turnaround strategies
The School Turnaround Group: Our approach

The School Turnaround Group works on the ground with state agencies and local school districts to both design and implement innovative reform strategies:

- Restructure state and local educational agencies to serve and support schools
- Establish flexible operating conditions
- Build capacity for turnaround by recruiting and developing Lead Partners

The effectiveness of our field work is bolstered by a number of critical support activities:

- Research and development
- Communications and advocacy
- Partnership and field building
What is turnaround?

Experts have identified over 5,000 schools as chronically low-performing. To address this problem systemically, State Educational Agencies, Local Educational Agencies, and partners need to implement comprehensive school turnaround strategies that produce dramatic change.

Turnaround is

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

1. produces significant gains in achievement within three years;

2. readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization.

Note: The School Turnaround Group’s definition of school turnaround, articulated above, describes a broad range of school improvement strategies and is not synonymous with USED’s turnaround intervention model.
Our research demonstrates some high-poverty schools have beat the odds.
Lessons learned: Factors for effective turnaround

The School Turnaround Group has identified three factors for successful school turnaround:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Clustering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased autonomy and flexibility for schools</td>
<td>• Emphasis on human capital</td>
<td>• Adoption of a zone-like structure for a subset of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Additional resources and funding</td>
<td>• Employment of a Lead Partner</td>
<td>• Identification of and focus on low-performing schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis on quality curricula, instruction, and use of assessment data</td>
<td>• Ongoing professional development opportunities</td>
<td>• Leveraging scale benefits across schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Streamlined compliance burden/increased regulatory freedom</td>
<td>• Strong school leadership, specific to turnaround</td>
<td>• Increased affiliation and collaboration across a subset of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of additional partners and collaborators</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Conditions change: Outside-the-system approaches, applied inside the system

INSIDE THE DISTRICT

- Traditional in-district operating conditions
- Increasingly flexible operating conditions

LOCAL TURNAROUND ZONE
with charter-like authority

OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT

- Charters

PEOPLE
More authority over hiring, placement, compensation, and work rules

TIME
More scheduling authority; longer day, longer year

MONEY
More budget flexibility, more resources

PROGRAM
More flexibility to shape program to students' needs and turnaround priorities
USDOE’s revised SIG program put school turnaround in the national spotlight

Public discourse around SIG varies widely between advocates and opponents.

**General advantages**

- Identification of states’ chronically lowest-performing schools
- Increased resources focused on the needs of these schools
- Funds available to Title-I-eligible secondary schools that don’t receive Title I funds
- Expedited NCLB ‘s light-touch sanction timeline

**Common controversies**

- Rapid dismissal of school staff and leaders
- Not all eligible schools receive SIG dollars
- Four, prescriptive intervention models (turnaround, transformation, restart, and closure)
- Sustaining reforms after ARRA SIG funding runs out
SIG presents an opportunity for states and districts to design and implement scalable turnaround strategies

**SEA role**

The state sets a tone for school-level turnaround by creating a sense of urgency for dramatic school improvement and by securing the conditions that allow for bold change.

**LEA role**

Districts play a critical role in creating the conditions that allow for turnaround, restructuring the district to prioritize underperforming schools, and shepherding resources and capacity toward the lowest-performing schools.

**School role**

Given the right level of support and autonomy and the right people in the building, schools can take charge of their readiness to learn, readiness to teach, and readiness to act and transform into high-performance organizations.
SIG has already incentivized states and districts to serve low-performing schools differently

1. Restructure state and local educational agencies to serve and support persistently low-achieving schools
   ➢ E.g., Colorado; Delaware; Louisiana; Massachusetts; New York

2. Align school improvement plans and multiple funding streams
   ➢ E.g., Massachusetts, Louisiana, Colorado

3. Establish flexible operating conditions
   ➢ E.g., Chicago, Delaware’s “Partnership Zone”

4. Build capacity for turnaround by recruiting and developing Lead Partners
   ➢ E.g., Illinois, Colorado
Year 1 of SIG implementation has presented challenges to state and district turnaround efforts

Common implementation challenges

- Agency capacity
- Turnaround in rural/small districts
- Political resistance
- Limited supply of school turnaround leaders and teachers
- Access to Lead Partner organizations
There’s no “secret sauce” to school turnaround

Regularly evaluate practices and adjust course based on performance.
Get involved

The School Turnaround Group is a division of Mass Insight Education, an independent non-profit that organizes public schools, higher education, business, and state government to significantly improve student achievement, with a focus on closing achievement gaps.

For more information on how your state can employ these promising practices for school turnaround, please contact the School Turnaround Group at:

The School Turnaround Group
Mass Insight Education
18 Tremont Street, Suite 930 • Boston, MA 02108 • 617-778-1500
turnaround@massinsight.org

The School Turnaround Groups offers a broad range of strategic consulting services to state and district clients. This work includes building organizational capacity through the development of state and district turnaround offices, securing more flexible operating conditions, including through the development of modified collective bargaining agreements; attracting and supporting Lead Partners through the development of Request for Proposal and Memorandum of Understanding tools; and auditing state and district readiness to implement dramatic turnaround strategies.

In each of our engagements, we seek to deeply understand the needs of our client to offer highly customized solutions and to develop lasting relationships to support the difficult work of school turnaround over the necessarily long time frame.
The Economic Stimulus: School Improvement Grants

Louisiana Department of Education
Rayne Martin
Framing the Challenge in Louisiana

- Students Successfully Complete At Least 1 Year of Post-Secondary Education: 56%
- Students Enroll in Post-Secondary Education or Graduate Workforce-Ready: 51%
- Students Graduate On Time: 67%
- Students Perform At or Above Grade Level in Math by 8th Grade: 59%
- Students Perform At or Above Grade Level in English Language Arts by 8th Grade: 62%
- Students Enter 4th Grade On Time: 67%
- Students are Literate by 3rd Grade: 39%
- Students Enter Kindergarten Ready to Learn: 66%
LDOE Recently Restructured to Better Serve Louisiana’s Districts and Schools

Office of Innovation

District Support Office

Assess LEA Capacity
Identify LEA Needs

Human Capital Office
School Turnaround Office

Provide Targeted Services to Contribute to the District Support Strategy

Goal Offices
Departmental Support Office
Finance Office
Superintendent’s Office

Leverage Other LDOE Offices and Programs
The Theory of Intervention
The stakes are high for districts to take responsibility for their low-performing schools. The state first works with the district directly to build their capacity to support schools. If the district fails to show dramatic improvement, the state will directly intervene in the school.

As determined by the State Superintendent and BESE, schools that the district has failed to improve after multiple years are directly-run by the RSD or chartered.

Based on BESE decision, districts with schools eligible for takeover may enter an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Management Agreement (MA) that articulates actions that must be implemented in order for the school to avoid placement in the RSD.

Watch List schools are supported by the School Turnaround Office (STO) via district capacity building efforts.
School Turnaround Office Mission

The mission of the School Turnaround Office (STO) is to build state and local capacity to turn around persistently low-achieving schools in Louisiana to prevent the need for state intervention. To this end, there are two major goals:

• Produce significant gains in student achievement within three years so that no school is in jeopardy of state takeover.

• Prepare the Local Education Authority and impacted schools for the longer process of transforming into high-performance organizations.
School Turnaround Framework

While most educational initiatives are geared toward demonstrating student achievement that takes place over a long time period, School Turnaround is designed to bring about urgency and time-compressed change in one to two years.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL STRATEGIES

- Effective Turnaround Leader
- Human Capital Actions
- Autonomy for School Leaders
- Proven Instructional Strategies
- Job Embedded and Data-Driven Professional Development
To effectively support school-level turnaround, **district-level changes** must be considered. While school-level reforms are critical, **the potential for school turnaround, particularly at scale, is maximized if districts can deliver on serving and supporting schools** through effective district level practices.

**EFFECTIVE DISTRICT STRATEGIES**

- **Human Capital Systems**
- **Flexibility and Accountability Policies**
- **Resource Targeting**
Louisiana Uses SIG as a Lever for Reform

LDOE Helps Districts Identify Intensive Intervention Strategies

**Objective:** District Applicants Implement Intensive Reforms Even if They Don’t Secure SIG Dollars

**SIG is a Means to an End;**
*Granting applicants SIG funding is not the ultimate goal.*
Setting the Bar High

Strong SIG Applications have Bold Plans for School Turnaround:
- Evidence of prior commitment to change
- District-level conditions change in human capital, autonomy policies, and resource targeting
- Dramatic, comprehensive school-level reform
- Evidence of ability and willingness to implement plans after application approval

Weak SIG Applications Lack Innovation, Demonstrated Commitment to Reform, and Bold Strategies for Change:
- More of the same
- “New” failed strategies
- Only school-level modifications
- Lack of buy-in from key stakeholders

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Louisiana’s Round 2 SIG Funding

LDOE Awarded Less than 50% of the State’s Round 1 Funding in 2010-2011, Leaving Significant Funding Available for Round 2

Round 1 SIG Sub-Grant Funds

- Remaining Round 1 Funds
- Round 1 Sub-Grant Funds Awarded

Round 1: Funded 32 Schools

Round 2 SIG Sub-Grant Funds

- $10.5M FY2010
- $34.5M FY2009
- ~ $45 M available

The Economic Stimulus: School Improvement Grants
### SIG Round 2 Applicants

**Total LEA Applications Submitted**: 29
**Total School Applications Submitted**: 84

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restart</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Intervention Model

- **Turnaround** (Golden): 50%
- **Transformation** (Red): 40%
- **Restart** (Blue): 10%
- **Closure** (No Color): 0%

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Louisiana Awarded $45 Million in Round 2 SIG Funds to 37 Schools Located in 16 LEAs.

Turnaround......................17
Transformation....................16
Restart..............................4
Closure..............................0

Intervention Model

- Turnaround: 46%
- Transformation: 43%
- Restart: 11%
- Closure: 0%
SIG Round 2 Technical Assistance

6-Month SIG Applicant Support Process

- Turnaround Toolkits (Model Implementation, LEA Communication, Policy Guides etc.)
- 3 Regional Technical Assistance Events
- Regular Phone/E-mail Consultations
- Access to LDOE technical assistance advisors (Mass Insight, TNTP)
- Draft Application Reviews
- On-Site Assistance
- Bi-Weekly E-Blasts
- 6 Webinars
- Superintendents’ Only Conference Call
- School Turnaround Website (www.laturnaround.com)
Emerging Results from Round 1 Grantees

4th Grade: Spring 2010 Compared to Spring 2011
Change in Percent of Students at Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Percentage Point Gains</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>SIG Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Emerging Results from Round 1 Grantees

8th Grade: Spring 2010 Compared to Spring 2011
Change in Percent of Students at Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>SIG Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emerging Results from Round 1 Grantees

10th and 11th Grade: Spring 2010 Compared to Spring 2011
Change in Percent of Students at Grade Level

- ELA: State -5, SIG Schools -2
- Math: State -4, SIG Schools -3
- Science: State 3, SIG Schools 22
- Social Studies: State -3, SIG Schools 2

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Challenges to Achieving Desired Results

1. Meeting human capital and other capacity needs, particularly in small and rural LEAs

2. Improving student performance at scale in districts with high concentrations of persistently low-achieving schools

3. Cultivating buy-in for SIG reform strategies among multiple stakeholder groups within districts

4. Changing district and school practices and policies that negatively impact low-performing schools

5. Replicating good school providers, creating a pipeline of effective charter school providers and incentivizing school closures
LDOE is Implementing a “Boots on the Ground” Support Strategy to Drive Lasting Results

- Most of the Round 2 winners are new to this work and will need direct support from the SEA
- District capacity-building is necessary to sustain reform over time
- Districts will receive guidance and on-site support from LDOE to:
  - Amend teacher and principal contracts to increase autonomy in exchange for greater accountability
  - Reform Reduction-in-Force (RIF), teacher recruitment and selection, and other staffing policies
  - Use qualitative and quantitative data, including value-added data, to effectively assess performance and drive changes in practice
  - Align school plans and federal, state and local funding streams
  - Build pipelines of highly-effective turnaround leaders and teachers
  - Build District Turnaround Offices, where appropriate
Visit Us

www.louisianaschools.net
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