Recommendations on Indiana's Turnaround Academies

SBOE Meeting

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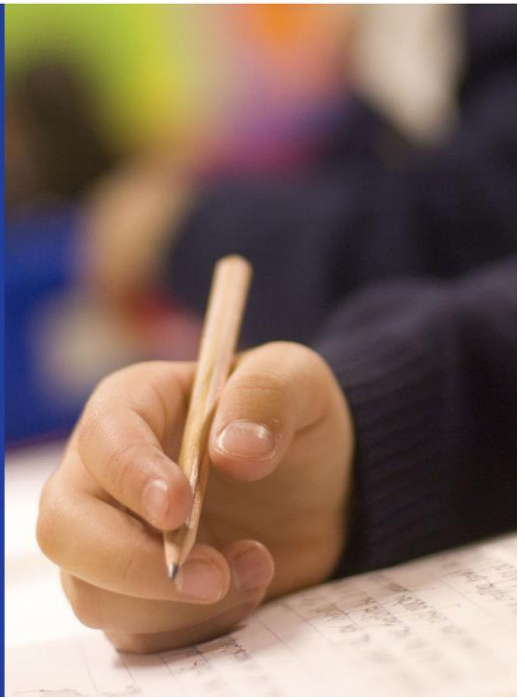
PUBLIC IMPACT



About Public Impact

Mission: dramatically improve learning outcomes for all children in the U.S., with a special focus on underserved students by:

- Expanding access to great teachers and leaders
- Equipping states and districts with tools to implement turnarounds in failing schools
- Expanding supply of high-quality charter schools
- Influencing policy and management practices that serve as important levers for school reform

Our Work for Indiana

1. Identify promising practices from other states related to state intervention in chronically failing schools
2. Collect and analyze select performance and enrollment data to describe progress at the state's turnaround academies
3. Interview state and district leaders and external partners to identify successes and challenges at the state's turnaround academies

Guidance to SBOE Turnaround Committee

1. October 22 Committee Meeting
   - Highlight promising practices for state intervention; insights from state practices, research, and Public Impact experience
2. November 17 Committee Meeting
   - Present recommendations for Turnaround Academy model refinement
   - Present recommendations on immediate SBOE decisions on turnaround academies
3. December 3 SBOE Meeting
   - Present final analysis and recommendations to SBOE

Agenda

- Key Findings from Interviews and School Performance Analysis

- Nine Priority Recommendations for Turnaround Academy Model Refinement

Key Findings

1. Many of the turnaround academies serve a markedly different student population than the schools served before state intervention.
2. Performance has been uneven with modest gains on some indicators, but only based on two years of data
3. Due to level of student enrollment change and TSO-school corporation transition challenges, data should be viewed as descriptive, not evaluative

Key Findings (cont)

4. Evidence suggests that state intervention has motivated some school corporations to implement new, bolder reform plans.
5. State capacity to support turnaround academy model has fluctuated since inception
6. Interviewees largely agreed on the importance of a number of key factors

Agenda

- Key Findings from Interviews and School Performance Analysis

- Nine Priority Recommendations for Turnaround Academy Model Refinement

Nine Priority Recommendations for Model Refinement

1. Articulate a clear set of transition options and criteria for current and future turnaround academies
2. Establish avenues for local, community-based councils to be informed of and involved in the change process
3. Build a deeper bench of partner organizations and education talent
4. Formalize the Transformation Zone model for state intervention

Nine Priority Recommendations (continued)

5. Re-purpose the “Lead Partner” model as an opportunity to pre-empt state intervention
6. More clearly define roles and responsibilities within MOUs and contracts
7. Reset performance goals for all turnaround academies to inform transition options.
8. Establish a more sustainable funding model for turnaround academy schools
9. Increase state capacity to manage the scope of state directed-turnaround interventions

1. Transition Options and Criteria

Problem: Law does not specify criteria for choosing among transition options or how the SBOE could proceed in implementing them

Recommendation: Articulate a clear set of transition options and criteria for current and future turnaround academies

1. Transition Options and Criteria

Key Elements

School Corporation Demonstrates Capacity	School Demonstrates Success: Yes	School Demonstrates Success: No
YES	• Transition school back to the school corporation • Convert to charter school *(if supported by school staff and local community)*	• Transition school back to the school corporation • Close or consolidate school*
No	• Convert to charter school	• Remain under state intervention ○ Select new provider, or ○ Implement Transformation Zone, or ○ Other model TBD • Close or consolidate school*

** Decision should happen in conjunction with school corporation and school community. Facility would return to the school corporation.*

2. Avenues for Community Involvement

Problem: Process for determining state intervention did not include ongoing and intentional community engagement

Recommendation: State should take a lead role to ensure that local, community-based advisory councils are actively involved in the turnaround process

2. Avenues for community involvement

Key Elements

State role might include:

- Establishing local councils with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that include input on the intervention to be implemented, ongoing monitoring and accountability, and transition decisions
- Assigning dedicated, state-level community engagement coordinators to work with turnaround academy school communities

3. Building a Bench

Problem: Current intervention models hinge on the availability of a ready supply of high-quality partners and education talent, but in practice, they are lacking

Recommendation: Build a deeper bench of partner organizations and education talent to support turnaround efforts

3. Building a Bench

Key Elements – Partner Organization

Actively recruit external partners with a proven track record of success:

- Incubate local, high-performing charter schools and school leaders
- Ensure that partner organizations have the autonomy they need to implement their turnaround plan
- Offer successful partner organizations the opportunity and incentives to continue their work in the state beyond their contract (e.g. access to unused or under-utilized facilities in which to operate a new charter)

3. Building a Bench

Key Elements – Talent Pipeline

Actively build a pipeline of effective teachers and leaders:

- Align incentives for university partners, teacher prep, and talent development programs (e.g. TFA, TNTP) to train teachers and leaders to succeed for turnaround settings
- Encourage staffing models that expand impact of high-quality leaders to more schools and high-quality teachers to more students
- Provide financial incentives for talented educators to teach and lead in turnaround schools

4. Formalizing Transformation Zone

Problem: Transformation Zone is currently being used as state intervention model, but key aspects have not been formalized

Recommendation: Formalize Transformation Zone as a state intervention model

4. Formalizing Transformation Zone
Key Elements

- SBOE clarifies required elements of TZ plan
- School corp. submits a bold plan for improving student performance within 3 years
- State works with school corp. to revise and approve plan
- MOU defines operating conditions & performance goals
- School corp. works with “Support” or “Managing” partner to implement TZ plan (optional and subject to SBOE approval)
- TZ includes turnaround academies and feeder schools

4. Formalizing Transformation Zone
MOU Operating Conditions

- School-level autonomy for people, time, money and programs
- Streamlined administrative support for school operations tailored to school needs
- Clear accountability tied to multi-year goals with TZ reporting to directly to Superintendent
- Strong systems for placing and retaining effective leaders and teachers in TZ schools

4. Formalizing Transformation Zone
Partnership Model

- School corp. encouraged (not required) to select partner, but SBOE may consider as a necessary condition for approval
- Two distinct partnership types
  - **Support Partner**: Guidance and oversight to design and implement the TZ model
  - **Managing Partner**: Directly manage one or more TZ schools under school corp. governance, but with full authority and accountability for operations and outcomes

5. Re-purposing Lead Partner Model

Problem: The original Lead Partner model offered partner organizations limited authority that inhibited their ability to be effective

Recommendation: Cease using the Lead Partner model as a state intervention and re-purpose it as an opportunity for school corporations to pursue dramatic change and potentially avoid state intervention

5. Re-purposing Lead Partner Model

Key Elements

- Encourage school corps. to *voluntarily* identify and work with a lead partner to develop and implement a bold plan for school turnaround before becoming eligible for state intervention
- Threat of state-directed intervention offers an incentive for school corps. to implement more meaningful and bolder reform
- State to provide technical assistance and set conditions and accountability for the relationship through an MOU with the school corporation

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Problem: Existing MOUs largely fail to clarify key roles and responsibilities

Recommendation: More clearly define roles and responsibilities of state, school corporation, and partners with an MOU that includes all three parties, and all partner contracts

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Key Elements

At a minimum, the MOU should clarify the following:

- **Operations**: What operational support will the district and state continue to provide and at what cost?
- **Student enrollment and transition:** What are the parameters for student recruitment, enrollment, and records transfer that will guide school corporation and partner actions?
- **Finances**: What funds will the school operator receive over the course of turnaround contract, and what terms will dictate the ongoing services provided by school corporations?

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Key Elements (con.)

- **Materials and equipment**: Who "owns" the materials within the building?
- **Community engagement**: How will school, district, and state leaders coordinate communication and engagement with local communities?
- **Autonomy**: Which autonomies will the school and / or external partner have?
- **Conflict resolution: I**f any of the parties involved does not abide by the MOU, how will the conflict be resolved?
- **Lines of authority:** To whom and how must external partners and the school corp. report?

7. Performance Goals

Problem: Performance goals and benchmarks in partner contracts fall short in key ways, including:

- Not adjusted to reflect dramatic changes in student enrollment
- Lack clear link between performance and transition options
- Inconsistent scope across partner contracts

Recommendation: Reset performance goals for present and future turnaround academies to inform transition options

7. Performance Goals

Key Elements

Partner goals should meet at least two criteria:

1. Reflect the school's current status and priorities as identified through a comprehensive needs assessment
2. Reflect the entirety of goals for the turnaround

   For example:

   – Student academic growth and achievement
   – School culture and climate
   – Student retention and enrollment
   – Special education services
   – Financial and organizational sustainability

7. Performance Goals

Key Elements (con.)

SBOE should set goals to evaluate school corp's capacity to receive a school back form state intervention:

- Significant improvement in its other priority and focus schools (from P.L. 221)
- Appropriate district-level changes in staffing and structure to support low-performing schools (from P.L. 221)
- Examples of the school corporation providing school leaders autonomy to operate differently
- Evidence of an ongoing dialogue and cooperation between the external partner and the school corporation to facilitate a smooth transition

8. Financial Sustainability

Problem: Funding model does not facilitate long-term sustainability, nor short-term planning for partners, school corporations and schools

Recommendation: Establish multi-year funding model that provides adequate, predictable, and tapered funding amounts

8. Financial Sustainability

Key Elements

- Grant funding should be higher in years 1-3, but with gradual annual reductions
- Funding levels should be on par with other Indiana priority schools by years 4 and 5
- Facility, transportation and other operational costs must be reasonable and comparable to other schools
- TSO and school corp. capacity to manage grant reductions should be included in the performance goals that inform transition decisions

9. Increasing state capacity

Problem: P.L. 211 requires the state to assume new roles and responsibilities to intervene in failing schools, but has not created an adequate infrastructure to support that work

Recommendation: Increase state capacity to manage scope of state-directed turnaround interventions

9. Increase state capacity

Key Elements

1. Increase the level of resources dedicated to execute key responsibilities of the state intervention process
2. Establish an organizational and governance model that provides sufficient authority to manage the process, and clear accountability to the SBOE for implementing policies
   - Independent state turnaround unit
   - Statewide turnaround district (LEA)
3. Grant the state the authority to establish receivership over failing school corporations

9. Increase state capacity
Organizational Model

- State turnaround unit recommended
  - Short-term: operating separately but in coordination with IDOE to establish systems and staff positions to manage intervention model while ensuring direct accountability to the SBOE
  - Long-term: consider opportunities to integrate with IDOE school improvement division, **and/or** create a statewide turnaround district (LEA) to directly oversee TSO schools