Crafting a New Generation of Leaders

A Discussion Paper on State Initiatives
for Developing Effective Turnaround Principals

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May 2013 Peer-to-Peer State Convening

Contents

Foreword

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of School Turnaround (OST) recognizes the important role that school leaders can play in turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools. Throughout the country we see examples of strong principals leading successful school turnarounds. We also understand the challenge that school districts face in securing such leaders as the school turnaround effort moves forward.

In response to states' pressing need for information and models about current approaches for developing and sustaining effective leadership for school turnarounds, we organized a small convening of states in May 2013 at our headquarters in Washington, D.C. The states' representatives discussed their current turnaround initiatives and shared what they are learning from their efforts to increase the number of effective turnaround principals. We invited six states that already had in place policies or programs focused on developing turnaround principals and that were willing to share their experiences through peer-to-peer discussions.

This paper discusses the importance of developing a system for identifying, recruiting, training, and retaining school turnaround leaders, in part by highlighting efforts across states to place turnaround leaders in districts receiving School Improvement Grants (SIG) funds. Additionally, in response to feedback from states and districts regarding the need for effective turnaround leaders, in March 2014 the Department released a Notice Inviting Applications for the Turnaround School Leaders Program, making available an estimated $14 million to support efforts to implement leadership pipelines for SIG and SIG-eligible schools. Through these grants, districts, as well as states, institutions of higher education, and other organizations in partnership with districts, will be able to develop or enhance programs that recruit, select, train, place, and retain effective turnaround leaders.

I would like to thank the Kentucky Department of Education, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the New Mexico Public Education Department, the Oregon Department of Education, and the Arkansas Department of Education for participating in the peer-to-peer state convening, and the Ohio team for its contributions of information.

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Executive Summary

School transformation requires that school turnaround leaders make a clear commitment to dramatic changes, and signal the magnitude and urgency of those changes to staff (Herman et al. 2008). When immediate and bold changes are needed, cross-sector research studies suggest, strong school leadership is crucial to success:

> *"Two major factors affect turnaround success—the characteristics and actions of the turnaround leader, and the support for dramatic change that the leader and staff receive from the district, state, and/or other governing authority."*
> *(Steiner and Hassel 2011)*

While the responsibility for school quality and improvement is shared across state, district, and school leadership, the principal is directly accountable for implementing turnaround strategies and influencing the staff and culture of the school. He or she must champion the vision for systemic change and develop strategic plans for building staff capacity to provide effective instruction in order to increase student achievement.

Motivated by demands to increase the supply of effective school turnaround principals, states are designing and implementing a range of innovative policies to attract, develop, and support them. In its ongoing effort to support state agencies in learning from each other, the Office of School Turnaround (OST) organized a small convening of six states in May 2013 to discuss their current school turnaround initiatives and share what they were learning from their efforts to increase the number of effective turnaround principals. These six states already had in place policies or programs focused on developing turnaround principals and were willing to share their experiences. State agency teams from Arkansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Oregon participated in the convening. An Ohio team contributed information but was not able to attend.

This discussion paper summarizes the presentations and discussions from the May convening on the current policies and innovative approaches the states are using to develop and support effective turnaround principals. Included are synopses of state initiatives and emerging lessons and implications for state practice based on the peer-to-peer discussions held at this convening.

State Initiatives

State action on multiple fronts is required to meet the goal of developing an adequate supply of principals who are well qualified to lead turnaround schools. This paper organizes information about state initiatives in three clusters, illustrating the different approaches states are using for the development of principal leadership pipelines:

- **New types of preparation structures and partnerships.** North Carolina has established three regional leadership academies that provide preparation, early career support, and continuous professional development of school leaders to encourage long-term retention and on-the-job success. Kentucky has partnered with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to establish three regional centers to support low-performing schools through three-member teams that deliver direct support to districts and schools for building capacity and sustaining improvement practices. Arkansas has created a leadership academy that offers specialized training programs targeted at different types of leadership positions.

- **Turnaround principal competencies, knowledge, and tools.** Competencies are those patterns of thinking and behavior that lead to success in the role of turnaround principal, and which are different from simply having knowledge and information about what is expected in that role. New Mexico's mentorship program employs turnaround competencies to organize the selection, training, and placement of principals, and provides candidate leaders with two years of systematic support and training. Kentucky's intensive principal training in systems theory emphasizes the use of consistent tools and approaches for reviewing data and helping leaders go deeper in examining issues, concerns, and progress. Ohio's leadership academy provides intensive training to principals leading School Improvement Grants (SIG)-funded schools, creates a peer network of low-performing schools, and allows principals to reflect and engage in collegial discussions and cross-site sharing, networking, and feedback.

- **Onsite and intensive coaching.** Oregon's coaching program focuses on the match between coach and principal, and on establishing common messages, expectations, and tools for working in schools. The program also offers yearly trainings for coaches and ongoing support for principals. North Carolina's state system of support includes transformation coaches who work at the district and school levels.

Lessons and Implications

Although most state efforts for developing turnaround leaders are relatively new, lessons and implications about states' roles in reaching this goal are beginning to emerge. Recommendations from states participating in the convening are presented here within a framework of four components for implementing the development of school turnaround leaders.

- **State leadership role: Adopting state policies to advance high-quality school leadership**

   Communicating urgency. State agencies play an important role in conveying consistent and convincing messages to districts about the urgency of change when performance levels have been low for years.

   Aligning leadership competencies and standards. Increasingly, states want to ensure that principal training and leadership coaching deliver common messages about

what turnaround principals need to know and do, and integrate research-based competencies and skills.

Sustaining funding. To develop and implement principal pipeline initiatives, states have used varied sources of funding: Race to the Top state awards, state appropriations, private foundations, and the SIG state administrative set-aside. In many cases, the initiatives have required a deep investment of time, talent, and resources. The challenges of sustaining support for pipeline efforts are daunting, and states advise planning for continued support of principal development initiatives at the outset.

- **School leadership talent: Developing strategies for recruiting, selecting, and retaining effective turnaround leaders**

    Talent identification. Given the investment required to develop and retain effective turnaround principals, states at the convening described their interest in promoting more rigorous ways to identify principal candidates by providing districts and IHEs with information about how to do so based on leadership competencies and standards. Participants at the convening learned about the competencies of turnaround principals from staff from the nonprofit organization Public Impact based on research they have conducted, and also about the use of behavioral event interviews (see page 14) as a selection method.

    Candidate recruitment. While states are exploring innovative ways to attract and retain leaders in hard-to-staff schools, they still struggle to create a pool of qualified candidates, especially in rural areas.

    Placement and retention. Investments in preparing school turnaround leaders are wasted if those leaders choose not to apply for positions in low-performing schools or do not stay in those positions. States report that challenges are particularly acute in retaining principals in rural areas, even with the offer of bonuses or other incentives.

    District context and conditions. The ability of turnaround leaders to operate effectively has much to do with the district context, including whether districts provide the flexibility required to make changes in conditions (e.g., different curricula; additional staff, such as counselors; alternate school schedules) that have contributed to low performance. States are realizing that they must protect their leadership investments by helping districts recognize their responsibilities.

- **Turnaround principal preparation: Building effective pre-service training and residency programs**

    Differentiated training programs. States have learned to design leadership development programs for a variety of contexts. For example, states have found that preparing new principals requires a different strategy than training experienced principals in turnaround strategies.

Relevant content. A body of research on turnaround competencies and strategies is emerging as viable content for leadership training programs. States agree that training needs to integrate content that is relevant and aligned with state standards for administrators and competencies associated with turnaround leaders, including standards associated with instructional leadership.

Preparation program effectiveness. States are coming to realize that they need to put in place a process for evaluating outcomes of existing principal preparation programs. They also realize they need to create a more rigorous method for assessing the results of state-initiated efforts to support turnaround principal development. Several states at the convening shared preliminary evaluation results and plans for collecting additional data.

- **Turnaround principal support and evaluation: Enhancing and sustaining the results of turnaround principal pipeline efforts**

  Ongoing leadership coaching. Reflecting the importance of strengthening leadership in instruction, some states have invested heavily in principal coaching programs that may extend for several years and involve several expert practitioners providing support to a leadership team. More needs to be learned about the effectiveness of these intense coaching models.

  Appropriate evaluation of training/coaching programs. While the evaluation of training providers and coaches in many states focuses solely on delivery (e.g., number of hours, type of content), more emphasis is needed on the outcomes of training (e.g., increase in knowledge and skills, demonstrated proficiency in critical competency areas).

  Turnaround leader success. States need to ensure that both the development and implementation of new principal evaluation systems provide meaningful and fair information about performance. States are very interested in aligning principal evaluations with the leadership competencies and standards vital to success in turnaround schools.

Part I:
Introduction: The challenge of leading turnaround schools

The challenge of reforming the nation's most consistently underperforming schools today is greater than the challenges of past school reform efforts. While school improvement efforts are "often marked by steady, incremental improvements over a longer time," chronically low-performing schools cannot afford to take years to implement incremental reforms (Herman et al. 2008). For those schools, the need for change is urgent; rapid improvement over a shorter period of time is imperative to set a solid foundation for sustained achievement.

"Dramatic change requires urgency and an atmosphere of crisis. The indefensibly poor performance records at these schools … should ignite exactly the public, policymaker, and professional outrage needed to justify dramatic action." (Calkins et al. 2007)

In the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) practice guide, *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools*, "turnaround schools" are defined as those meeting two criteria: a) they begin as chronically poor performers—with a high proportion of their students failing to meet state standards of proficiency in mathematics or reading over two or more consecutive years; and b) they show substantial gains in student achievement in a short time, typically no more than three years (Herman et al. 2008).

School transformation requires that turnaround school leaders make a clear commitment to dramatic changes, and signal the magnitude and urgency of those changes to staff (Herman et al. 2008). When immediate and bold changes are needed, cross-sector research findings suggest, strong leadership is crucial to success: "Two major factors affect turnaround success: the characteristics and actions of the turnaround leader, and the support for dramatic change that the leader and staff receive from the district, state, and/or other governing authority." (Steiner and Hassel 2011) Strong leadership is needed on an ongoing basis to solidify and maintain the successes of early turnaround experiences.

The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, authorized under section 1003(g) of *Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*, as amended, recognizes the critical role of the principal. SIG funding is awarded by states to school districts with schools that show not only the greatest need for funds but also the "strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools" (SIG Program Description, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html). Under federal regulations, this commitment must be demonstrated by the school district's willingness and capacity to implement fully and effectively one of four rigorous interventions in the eligible schools the district proposes to serve. Two of the four intervention models mandate that the school principal be replaced (the "turnaround" and "transformation" models), while the other two models call for "restarting" a school under a new management entity or closing down a school completely.

> *"Without a high quality principal at the helm, students are unlikely to have the necessary successive years of effective teaching for their continued learning."* (Briggs et al. 2013)

> *"Frequent turnover of school leadership results in lower teacher retention and lower student achievement gains…particularly…for high poverty schools, low-achieving schools, and schools with many inexperienced teachers."* (Béteille et al. 2012)

While the responsibility for school quality and improvement is shared by state, district, and school leadership, the principal is directly accountable for implementing turnaround strategies, and influencing the staff and culture of the school. The principal must champion the vision for systemic change and develop strategic plans for building the staff's capacity to provide effective instruction in order to increase student achievement, and then maintain those gains.

Highly effective principals are essential to the success of turnaround efforts. A recent synthesis of the research on principal effectiveness by the Center for Public Education (CPE) indicated that effective principals can have a significant impact on student achievement as well as on the retention and recruitment of effective teachers (Hull 2012). In addition, research conducted by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) found that effective principals have a greater impact on student achievement in high-poverty schools, suggesting that principal ability is most important in schools serving the most disadvantaged students (Branch et al. 2012).

However, findings from the *Principal Policy State Survey* conducted by the George W. Bush Institute's Alliance to Reform Education Leadership (AREL) indicate that there is a shortage of highly qualified principals in schools across the country (Briggs et al. 2013). This supply shortage is even more pronounced in turnaround schools, and the process of finding, supporting, and retaining principals in these settings can be discouraging. Schools serving low-achieving students often have principals who have "less experience and less education and who attended less selective colleges." (Loeb et al. 2010)

To have an impact, principals need to stay in their positions. A principal may rely on different skills at the outset of a school turnaround than during the maintenance phase but continuity is critical. "Annual principal turnover rates in school districts throughout the country range from 15 to 30 percent each year with especially high rates of turnover in schools serving more low-income, minority and low-achieving students." (Béteille et al. 2012)

Although various qualitative and quantitative research studies have shown that new principals become more effective as they gain experience, the average principal tenure often is little more than three-and-a-half years (e.g., Béteille et al. 2011; Branch et al. 2012; Marzano et al. 2005; Seashore-Louis et al. 2010). One study of six urban school districts (based on descriptive, survey, and case study data collected for the RAND Corporation's seven-year evaluation of New Leaders, an organization that develops transformational school leaders) found that "over one-fifth of new principals leave within two years, and those placed in schools that failed to meet adequate yearly progress targets are more likely to leave." (Burkhauser et al. 2012)

Furthermore, descriptive research and survey findings suggest that some credentialed school and district administrators are choosing not to move into leadership positions or are avoiding districts with the biggest needs (Gates et al. 2003; Gates et al. 2005). Reasons often include inadequate compensation, long hours, decreased job security, stress, and added responsibilities (Gates et al. 2001; Roza 2003). State agency staff attending the convening reported that new graduates and existing school staff with leadership potential appear to be taking on administrative positions in fewer numbers due to changes in the role of school leaders and their responsibilities, the increased demands of the job, and a lack of professional satisfaction and rewards, especially in turnaround settings.

> *"Increasing demands upon the work life of the principal, low salary levels, time constraints, lack of parent and community support and lack of respect are among the reasons that principals are leaving the position." (Norton 2002)*

The implications of these findings for states are evident. States need to use policy levers to

- provide the resources needed for principals to carry out their roles;
- support organizational change at the school level; and
- provide district and state staff with training and professional development focused on supporting principals (Seashore-Louis et al. 2010).

Role of the state agency in developing principals

"… state initiatives matter. States, for all the variability in their approaches to policy making, are firmly focused on standards and accountability." (Seashore-Louis et al. 2010)

The role of the state agency is essential for developing turnaround leadership. States control entry into the profession, and have policy and regulatory levers they can use to ensure effective leadership (Briggs et al. 2013). Although some states have initiated a range of policy changes to address the shortage of principals, challenges remain in identifying, preparing, training, and retaining appropriate school turnaround candidates.

A policy report on the results of a four-year study of America's education schools finds that many school administrator leadership preparation programs continue to offer traditional course work that fails to incorporate current research findings on effective leadership (Levine 2006). Regrettably, few preparation programs have focused on the specialized skill development a principal would need to lead a turnaround effort. Compounding the issue is the fact that, although there is a growing body of evidence from cross-sector research conducted by Public Impact (2007) on the wide range of skills and behaviors that principals need to succeed, there still is no consensus on which skills are most important for a school turnaround leader. It is not surprising then that so many potential leaders graduate unprepared for the difficult tasks ahead of transforming a low-performing school into a successful one.

> *"States play an important role in determining the way principals are selected, prepared, licensed, hired, evaluated, supported and developed, promoted, and compensated. Principal effectiveness standards describe the skills, knowledge, dispositions, and behaviors of successful school leaders. States can use these standards to undergird their efforts and policies to ensure an aligned and comprehensive approach to building an effective corps of school leaders. The standards provide a framework to inform such policies as principal preparation program approval, licensure, professional development, and evaluation requirements, ensuring a coherent set of state policies and practices aimed at increasing the number of effective principals in a state."*
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> ────────
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> *"Twenty-eight states reported that neither the state nor principal preparation programs are required to collect any outcome data on principal preparation program graduates to know if they secure jobs, retain them, show impact on student achievement, or earn effective ratings on principal evaluations."*
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> *Few states require rigorous recruitment and selection of aspiring leaders and authentic clinical leadership experiences that we know are vital to principal success.*
>
> *(Briggs et al. 2013)*

State representatives at the convening agreed that they could use their authority more effectively to advance the types of policies that influence the accreditation of principal preparation, principal licensure, and principal evaluation, and that lead to an increase in the supply of qualified principal candidates for turnaround settings.

Unfortunately, it appears that many states lack the data they need to determine if the supply of candidates graduating from leadership programs is adequate or whether more are needed. Findings from AREL's recent survey on states' policies affecting principal preparation, licensure, and tenure, and data collection about these issues revealed that little is known in many states about post-placement principal outcomes. States have not collected data to determine how many graduates actually become principals, how long principals stay in their positions, or whether they are effective in improving achievement.

Outcome data on new principals and principal retention would help states and districts determine not only whether supply is meeting demand, but also how many candidates are needed for preparation programs (Briggs et al. 2013; New Leaders for New Schools 2013a, 2013b).

Through their authority, states could call on principal preparation programs to collect and provide them with post-placement data on entry and retention patterns. This follow-up would enable preparation programs to assess their impact on graduates in terms of job effectiveness, what is working or lacking in the program, and what more programs can do to prepare graduates to lead turnaround schools. In addition, states could use post-placement data to hold programs accountable for the quality of their graduates.

AREL also found that only five states require their preparation programs to include all the critical components that research suggests are important to produce effective leaders, such as clearly defined principal competencies, strategic recruitment of candidates, relevant course work taught by faculty with practitioner experience, and authentic learning experiences in real school settings (Briggs et al. 2013).

Several resources are available to help states establish principal preparation and training policies that could lead to improvements in turnaround principal recruitment and effectiveness.

- AREL has identified nine principal preparation competencies that states can use as guides to set standards for principal preparation programs in areas such as purpose, recruitment and selection, course work, post-graduate support, and evaluation (http://www.bushcenter.org/sites/default/files/ninecompetencies.pdf).
- Recent reports from New Leaders for New Schools, the Wallace Foundation, and Bain & Company expand on these findings and provide further recommendations for improving state policies on principal preparation accreditation and licensure.
- New Leaders for New Schools has examined program evaluation and approval and using licensure and re-licensure to ensure effective educators (New Leaders for New Schools 2013a, 2013b).
- The Wallace Foundation has studied district efforts in setting leadership standards and developing principal pipelines through providing training, placement, and support to principals (Turnbull et al. 2013).
- The Bain report describes how school systems can develop talented educators into prospective leaders who can transform schools (Bierly and Shy 2013).

State actions in progress

State representatives reported at the convening that, motivated by demands to increase the supply of effective turnaround principals, they are designing and implementing a range of innovations to attract, develop, and support turnaround principals. Some states described their partnerships with universities to ensure a focus on turnaround skills in their pre-service training for those who plan to enter the field. Other states reported that they are looking at creating leadership academies and in-service professional development programs to groom existing school staff to become turnaround principals.

On-the-job support for principals is critical. During convening discussions, several states described in-depth coaching programs they have initiated for developing principals for turnaround schools. Other states explained the support they are providing for turnaround principals after they are hired to grow on the job and succeed in a demanding turnaround environment (Cheney et al. 2010). Although principals in most states are receiving professional development, the design of these programs, similar to pre-service programs, may lack a crucial focus on turnaround competencies and skills. Post-placement support can help determine what principals need to grow in the job, which will in turn inform the development of effective approaches for principal preparation as well as on-the-job support approaches—recognizing that some on-the-job support will always be needed and what is needed will depend on the particular school context.

Much is happening quickly around the country, and, those in attendance at the convening reported that Race to the Top (RTT) and the SIG program have been major drivers of state-initiated efforts to develop preparation programs and supports. States now feel a new sense of urgency to learn from the innovations and promising work other states are doing to identify and select qualified candidates; collaborate with principal preparation programs

on aligning content to turnaround needs; provide ongoing support through training and coaching; and retain turnaround principals for more than one or two years.

Intensifying state support: The Office of School Turnaround (OST)

The Office of School Turnaround has responded to the evolving needs of states by building its knowledge of turnaround efforts in SIG schools to inform monitoring, technical assistance, and policy decisions. The focus remains on increasing the capacity of states and districts to improve student outcomes and sustain turnaround reforms. OST has extended its support to provide more direct technical assistance to states on critical issues and enable them to learn from the innovative turnaround work in other states.

In 2011, OST introduced the State-to-State Visit Technical Assistance Initiative, which proved successful in delivering intensive, on-site assistance to nine states. Based on lessons learned from this initiative and the growing urgency from states to learn from each other, OST refined its plan of action in 2012 and introduced the Turnaround Peer-to-Peer Learning Initiative to facilitate strategic discussions about turnaround efforts at the state level. Through this effort, OST was able to expand its direct assistance to 12 additional states that were implementing a range of initiatives for improving low-performing schools and that agreed to participate in the state-to-state visits. Six states each hosted an on-site visit from six other states to share information about effective turnaround strategies being implemented in their states and assist each other with the design of improvement plans. In addition, expert consultants participated in these state visits and provided relevant resources and other support.

OST further refined its efforts with the goal of creating peer-to-peer environments in which small groups of states could share their approaches to critical issues they face in improving low-performing schools. Two small group convenings focused on policy levers states can use to influence change were held in 2013. This paper reports on the first convening, which was held in May 2013. The second convening, in June, dealt with the state's role in supporting instruction and included states that had introduced policy initiatives focused on the state's responsibility for supporting and promoting instruction in turnaround schools, which is also documented in a discussion paper.

The May convening was planned in direct response to states' pressing need for information and models about current approaches for developing and sustaining effective leadership for turnaround schools. See the Appendix for information about the convening and the agenda. Representatives from six states (Arkansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Oregon) were invited to participate in the convening to learn from each other and experts about policies and methods currently being used to increase the quantity of well-qualified school turnaround leaders. The Ohio team was not able to attend the convening but information about their practices was shared at the session.

The intent of this discussion paper is to share information from the May convening about states' initiatives to identify, train, and support turnaround principals. During the convening, state agency representatives discussed their motivations and experiences, including actions taken, obstacles overcome, successes, and disappointments. Among the topics that generated the most discussion were how to identify principal candidates, ways to encourage placements in hard-to-serve regions, the district conditions that support retention of principals, and judging return on investments in preparing principals. The paper's summary is a snapshot of lessons, next steps, and implications offered by participating states to other states—peer-to-peer advice about the critical factors to consider when making choices about investments in principal pipelines.

Part II:
State Initiatives: Innovations for developing and sustaining effective leaders

This section of the paper highlights the promising methods that states are using to cultivate highly qualified turnaround leaders.

There is no one proven way to approach the challenges of how to recruit, train, and retain high-quality school leaders. Each state has developed approaches to match its context, resources, existing leader preparation and support programs, and local needs. While some states are moving forward with initiatives on several fronts, others are focusing on a single approach. Some are further along (based on factors such as availability of RTT funds) and have worked out many of the bugs, while others are just now embarking on ambitious plans. In this paper, the initiatives implemented by states participating in the convening are organized in the following three clusters, each including critical questions different states considered in developing principal pipelines and examples for each:

- **New types of preparation structures and partnerships:** How can states work with IHEs to improve the design and relevance of principal preparation programs? Beyond IHEs, what other types of entities can prepare principals? What features are important in a preparation program to ensure successful outcomes, including retention in job placements?
- **Turnaround principal competencies, knowledge, and tools:** What competencies do school leaders need to be effective? How do the characteristics of turnaround principals differ from those of other principals?
- **On-site and intensive coaching:** What are efficient and effective ways to provide ongoing leadership coaching and support to turnaround principals? What conditions need to be in place to retain high-quality turnaround principals?

New types of preparation structures and partnerships

States are trying out new organizational arrangements to prepare principals with the skills to succeed in turnaround settings. North Carolina, Kentucky, and Arkansas represent different models.

NORTH CAROLINA'S REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMIES—*To address concerns about long-term retention of principals, North Carolina has established regionally based principal preparation models.*

North Carolina has established three regional leadership academies in areas of the state that have a high number of SIG schools and schools designated as "priority schools," pursuant to the state's approved *ESEA* flexibility request. Under this request, the state commits, among other things, to turning around its lowest-performing schools over a three-year period. The academies, which have the authority to certify principals, are intended to increase the number of principals qualified to lead transformational change in low-performing schools in both rural and urban areas. Academies groom turnaround candidates drawn from within a region, and provide them with the types of training and support necessary to be successful in the role of principal. They provide a model for preparation, early career support, and continuous professional development of school leaders. The state has used both RTT and private foundation funds to support the development and operation of the academies.

One academy is based at North Carolina State University, another is at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and the third was founded by the Sandhills Regional Education Consortium. The academies are intended to draw from their immediate geographic regions as a way to recruit principal candidates who may be more likely to seek (or remain) in jobs in the nearby area once certified. Understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all model for training effective leaders, the state designed each of the three regional leadership academies to take on the "flavor" of that particular region. Academies are customized to fit regional needs, with program requirements, length, nature of the practicum experience, and type of degree and/or certification offered varying by region.

North Carolina:

"Our three academies are an experiment to identify the best approach to leadership development from a regional perspective."

- *Northeast Leadership Academy (partner: North Carolina State University)*

- *Piedmont-Triad Leadership Academy (partner: University of North Carolina at Greensboro)*

- *Sandhills Regional Education Consortium*

(North Carolina team presentation 2013)

In 2010, North Carolina recruited the first cohort of principal candidates, focusing on the ranks of central office staff and classroom teachers through a careful selection process. The Northeast Leadership Academy is located in a rural region of the state that had experienced significant turnover among principals and difficulty recruiting. It provides two years of field-based experiences and course work to earn a Master of School Administration and principal licensure. Piedmont-Triad and Sandhills are one year long, and participants earn a principal's license and credits toward a master's degree. Candidates are supported financially in different ways: Some continue to be employed by the district while in the academy; others receive stipends ($50,000) for contract positions (Brown 2013a).

District leaders nominate qualified candidates for admission to the academies. Prospective attendees then participate in selection processes that include an interview by academy coordinators, response to group scenarios, a teacher observation and response, and a presentation on a school-based problem. In accepting the offer to participate, candidates must agree to fulfill the requirements of the program and commit to service in the region upon completion.

Successful academy graduates are licensed as school principals and obligated to work in the region either three or four years, depending on the academy. In the first cohort, 127 candidates were accepted from a pool of 656 candidates. Of those who successfully completed an academy program, 90 percent attained school leadership positions within three months of completion. The state expects that by 2014 the academies will have produced 180 or more qualified turnaround principals. Ongoing formal program evaluation is being conducted with a focus on sustainability, candidate recruitment, mentor selection and training, induction support through job placement, and attention to Common Core State and NC Essential Standards. The state reports preliminary indications for retention of principals and student achievement gains in the schools where graduates have been placed (Brown 2013a, 2013b; Hall et al. 2012).

KENTUCKY'S REGIONAL CENTERS OF LEARNING EXCELLENCE—
The state works through IHEs to provide support for low-performing schools through three-member Education Recovery teams.

Kentucky has partnered with institutions of higher education (Eastern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University, and the University of Louisville) to establish three regional Centers of Learning Excellence to support low-performing schools and districts. Centers are led by Education Recovery (ER) directors responsible for coordinating state assistance to persistently low-achieving schools and districts. The ER program plays a primary role in delivering direct support to districts and schools for building their capacities and sustaining improvement practices.

The state based its professional development efforts for low-performing schools at these three centers and built on the IHEs' existing work in schools. With the SIG program's attention to the needs of turnaround principals, IHEs have focused more work on school improvement. Although Kentucky originally focused the work of the centers on teacher preparation, the program has now expanded to include principal support.

ER teams have been formed to build principal and leadership team capacity through providing intensive, on-the-ground support to each SIG school focused on increasing student achievement and ensuring that students are college- and career-ready. Although ER staff are employed by the district, the state is involved from beginning to end with their selection and training. Kentucky provides coaching for turnaround principals to make sure they are effective and retained in their positions. A "team of three" model is used, with each ER school team consisting of a director, a leader, and a specialist, and representing expertise in the key areas required to transform low-performing schools. ER team members work as mentors and facilitators with principals and other staff. In addition, the ER team helps the principal to build an effective school leadership team. ER leaders (all of whom have been principals) are placed in each school to mentor, shadow, and guide principals. With transforming instruction seen as the key to improving student achievement, the team helps principals develop the capacity to plan and monitor curriculum and instruction;

provide assessment feedback to staff; focus instructional decisions on support for effective teaching and leadership skill development; and identify resources and activities supportive of an effective learning environment. ER specialists, including mathematics and literacy experts, model instruction, lead professional learning communities (PLCs), and train teacher-leaders.

The ER team is directive—focused on gathering implementation data and improving school performance. It works together to help principals and school leadership teams align curriculum to state standards; develop formative check-in assessments; analyze and use student data to inform instruction; develop and implement research-based instructional practices; provide professional development opportunities; and connect with families and community groups.

Kentucky is in the process of evaluating the ER approach with data obtained from implementation rubrics administered twice a year, progress reviews of schools conducted every two years, examinations of student outcomes, and measures of the level of systems implementation.

ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY—*A high-profile entity offers multiple strands of leadership development and the state provides incentives for the placement of principals in high-need schools.*

With financial support from 50 partners, including the governor's office, several IHEs, the Walton Family Foundation and Wal-Mart Stores, and Arkansas Educational Television Network, the Arkansas Department of Education established the Arkansas Leadership Academy School Support Program (SSP) to develop and sustain effective leadership to address two urgent concerns in the state: dealing with high leadership turnover in hard-to-staff schools, and attracting effective leaders to high-need areas (e.g., the rural Delta region, high-poverty schools, and areas with limited housing) (Arkansas Leadership Academy 2013). In a recent change, the SSP now focuses on leaders from priority schools and principals from other schools that are not meeting the state's annual measurable objectives and who are required to attend the academy. Seven specialized training programs are targeted at different types of leadership positions: master principal, assistant principal, facilitator (professional development), school support (teams from low-performing schools and districts), superintendent, teacher leader, and team leadership.

The two-year SSP training program gives leaders support to address current problems in their schools. Over the two years, participants meet eight times a year. The academy also administers the Master Principal Program to prepare principals who serve as mentors to academy participants. Outstanding principals are nominated by school districts to attend the voluntary three-year program. The state provides a bonus of $9,000 annually for five years to master principals serving as full-time principals in Arkansas public schools. $25,000 is

awarded annually for five years to master principals who agree to serve in a high-need school as defined by the state. To date, 20 principals have completed the Master Principal Program.

Since the start of this program, the state has seen gains in literacy and mathematics performance for students in the lowest-performing schools; increases in advanced and proficient literacy performance; and positive results from formal evaluations of student achievement conducted by the University of Arkansas. Evaluation outcomes for principals showed greater leadership knowledge and skills for those who participated in the SSP's reflective practice opportunities and peer learning networks (Bengtson et al. 2012).

Turnaround principal competencies, knowledge, and tools

The research on principal effectiveness in turnaround schools is just emerging, and so it has not yet informed existing state standards for principals. The specialized competencies required for leading school turnaround require revisions to the content, skills, and learning experiences provided through most existing leadership training programs. New Mexico, Kentucky, and Ohio are inspired by new thinking about what skills leaders need.

NEW MEXICO'S PRINCIPALS PURSUING EXCELLENCE: CAREER PRINCIPAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM—*The state is employing turnaround competencies to structure the selection, training, and placement of principals.*

New Mexico has initiated the Career Principal Mentorship Program to provide turnaround leader candidates with two years of systematic support and training. The design is modeled on the University of Virginia's School Turnaround Specialist Program, and informed by lessons learned from SIG school experiences and the state's instructional audits and data reviews. The program is a collaboration between the state and school districts to strengthen the leadership pipeline in order to grow more turnaround principals. It is funded by state revenues along with support from the Daniels Fund. Candidates are selected on the basis of the specific characteristics, skills, and experiences that are associated with successful turnaround principals using a competency-based approach that features a behavioral event interview (BEI).

Mentors (sitting or recently retired principals) who support principals in the program receive compensation and training support. Training for mentors entails an initial two-day leadership academy, an intensive two-to-three day seminar, three days of follow-up trainings, on-site support to work on program growth plans, and monthly meetings. A mentor and turnaround leader will work collaboratively with district leaders to assess school needs and design effective turnaround strategies. The district-level turnaround

leader is expected to shepherd the work of the mentor and principal mentee. Part of the district turnaround leader's role is to link with the district superintendent to assure the availability of the agreed-upon supports necessary to accomplish 90-day plans that are based on turnaround competencies.

New Mexico is basing its candidate and mentor selection approach on Public Impact's turnaround leader competencies, organized into four clusters of related abilities—1) driving for results; 2) influencing for results; 3) problem solving; and 4) showing confidence to lead. Although it is possible to train for and develop competencies, the state believes that identifying and selecting candidates who already have developed the competencies (even in a context outside education) is likely to be the most efficient and effective approach for building up the pipeline of turnaround principals. For that reason, New Mexico is focusing attention on the process of selecting principal candidates and matching them with mentor principals (Public Impact 2007).

Turnaround Leader Competencies

Competencies are patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, or speaking that facilitate success in a job or role. By mapping cross-sector research on turnaround leader actions to high-quality competency studies of successful entrepreneurs and leaders in large organizations, Public Impact identified four clusters of competencies and has developed more detailed skill information within each cluster.

- Driving for results (maintaining a focus on learning results)
- Influencing for results (working through and with others)
- Problem solving (solving and simplifying complex problems)
- Showing confidence to lead (staying focused, committed, and self-assured)

States and districts committed to using turnaround leader competencies (rather than traditional administrator requirements) will integrate desired actions and specific competencies into the candidate selection process, training and mentoring programs, and the hiring and evaluation of principals.

Behavioral event interviews. To apply competencies in candidate selection and hiring, the behavioral event interview (BEI), a particular type of selection process, can be used to measure how well principals or candidates rate. Through BEIs, candidates are asked to describe in detail their actions and thinking in past work events.

Here are examples of questions that can yield responses predictive of success for turnaround leaders:

Achievement. Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work, and tell me the story.

Impact and influence. Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.

Monitoring and directiveness. Think about a time when you set a standard for someone else's work and held that person accountable for adhering to that standard, and tell me the story.

Team leadership. Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you, and tell me the story.

Self-confidence. Tell me about a time when you helped another person, someone whom others were not sure could improve, to achieve or succeed at a higher level. Tell me about a time when another person or people stood in your way to get something done and you addressed the situation to your satisfaction.

(Steiner and Barrett 2012; Public Impact 2008a, 2008b, 2008c)

KENTUCKY'S TRAINING IN SYSTEMS THINKING—*Principals receive training in how to use a set of consistent tools designed to facilitate school improvement.*

Kentucky provides training and modeling in systems theory for principals. The ER teams (see p. 10) train leaders to use a set of quality tools for planning, gathering reactions from staff, reviewing data, providing feedback, and examining underlying causes of problems. The goal is that state staff, ER teams, and local leaders will all learn how to use the same tools and processes so that they will share a common language and have the same perspectives on how to determine progress.

Four of Kentucky's recommended tools and approaches are described below.

1. **30-60-90 day Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)**—a systematic way of planning school improvement that begins with diagnosing actual problems in a school, moves on to identifying horizon goals ("big rocks"), and leads to writing objectives and actions. At the start, a needs assessment is conducted to determine the school's capacity, asking *What can you provide on your own?* and *What additional support do you still need?* Every 30 days, schools analyze progress and determine what needs to continue or change, as well as identify new issues.

2. **Education Recovery and School Review instrument**—Organized as seven categories of a high-performing system aligned with state indicators, this tool allows the school leadership and ER team to determine areas in need of improvement.

3. **Plan-do-study-act (PDSA)**—a systematic improvement process with related tools, e.g., action plan, review process, and monitoring plan.

4. **Root cause analysis**—a method of looking deeper into concerns and problems, and finding out why they are happening.

OHIO'S EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY—*The Academy provides executive education for all SIG principals.*

Ohio designed the Executive Principal Leadership Academy (the Academy) to provide intensive training to principals leading SIG-funded schools, creating a peer network of low-performing schools. The Academy is a six-month commitment that allows participants to immerse themselves in the program content of four two-day sessions over an extended period of time. This allows the principal to reflect upon concepts, complete assignments, and engage in collegial discussions and cross-site sharing, networking, and feedback (Reform Support Network 2012). All principals of low-performing schools are required to attend the Academy; assistant principals and some district leaders are invited if openings exist. Since 2010, six cohorts of 50 principals and other leaders completed the program, for a total of approximately 300 leaders, including every SIG principal in the state and many SIG assistant principals.

The Academy's curriculum was developed through a collaboration between the Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Education. All content focuses on

instructional excellence and leadership, aligned with the Six Pillars curriculum: education strategy, goal setting, culture and understanding, team building and communication, organizational leadership and performance, and accountability and responsibility. About half of the principals elect to take advantage of six months of optional follow-up coaching following completion of their studies at the Academy. The coaching is individualized to each principal, informed by a 360-degree leadership feedback survey aligned with behavioral-based leadership dimensions that are part of the curriculum.

An assessment is being conducted to explore the results of having implemented the Academy— the benefits, impacts, limitations, challenges or barriers, and lessons learned. Emerging evidence suggests that the Academy has helped novice principals develop new skills and helped experienced ones strengthen their skills (Anderson-Butcher 2012).

On-site leadership coaching

States that have established executive coaching systems report that ongoing support is an incentive for retaining principals in the demanding turnaround environment. Oregon and North Carolina have made significant investments in coaching systems and their representatives were able to share lessons from their experiences. For example, Oregon has learned that the matching of coaches with principals must be done carefully so that trusting relationships can develop. Coaches benefit from information about the competencies of turnaround principals, enabling them to work from a common framework in shaping their consultations with individual principals.

OREGON'S PRINCIPAL COACHING SYSTEM—*The state emphasizes the importance of the right match of coaches and principals.*

Oregon has set up a principal coaching system to build school leadership capacity across a range of areas. The intent is to provide value-added assistance, "to facilitate leadership efficacy, not to do the [principal's] work." Oregon emphasizes the coaching relationship as one in which administrators can have a safe place to grow, learn, and try new things. The credibility of the coach in the eyes of school staff is critical and trust is of the essence: "Having the right coach in place makes the difference." The state allows principals to have input about which coach is placed in their school. Currently, Oregon has approximately 70 leadership coaches who serve 100 schools; most are recently retired administrators. (Oregon team presentation 2013)

A major challenge has been to get the right coach in the right place. Coaching placements are based on the match between a school's needs and the coach's knowledge and skills. Often the match is based on the coach's expertise in addressing the reason why the school was designated as low-performing as well as familiarity with similar school contexts.

Coaches receive a two-day orientation each year focused on common messages and expectations as well as on tools for working in schools. They also receive yearly trainings and ongoing information. Oregon has found it critical each year to first train coaches on any policies, programs, and practices that will be required of principals, e.g., new state reporting requirements or setting up PLCs. Coaches are encouraged to learn about the strengths of other coaches during the annual training in order to call upon them as resources, as needed.

Most important, the state conveys a sense of urgency about school turnaround to its coaches. "Coaches were told they had no more time to talk about change … change has to happen now … their jobs are on the line." In addition to content knowledge, coaches must develop a skill set of coaching strategies to move schools forward. State staff found that coaches need to push staff out of their comfort zones to move away from ineffective practices and bring about change: "You need a certain fit but a bit of an irritant to move things forward." (Oregon team presentation 2013)

Oregon conducts extensive evaluation activities: Ongoing needs assessments; surveys of coaches, principals, teachers, and leadership teams; formal coach and principal interviews; collection of principal testimonials; analysis of school and student data; consultation with its regional network coordinators who function as the coaches' coach; and a formal external evaluation. Formative results have been used to alter and improve the coaching program, including setting expectations for coaches and principals, focusing the training of coaches, and identifying coaches' common needs for materials to use in their consultations.

NORTH CAROLINA'S TRANSFORMATION COACHES—*School and district transformation coaches work closely with SIG schools and low-functioning districts, and are linked into the statewide resource system through regional roundtables.*

Three years ago, North Carolina hired school-level transformation coaches to support and work side-by-side with RTT and SIG principals to implement effective practices. Depending on the need, a coach might assist in a variety of areas in a school, e.g., provide professional development, work on evaluation, or help with scheduling. Coaches are successful building administrators, most with turnaround experience, who typically each support three SIG schools. School transformation coaches interact regularly with quality reviewers (monitors) which gives them extra leverage with school principals (Thompson et al. 2011).

Thirteen low-functioning districts have been designated as transformation districts, via a signed formal agreement, and each is assigned a district transformation coach. Coaches are placed in districts to build their capacity to support low-performing schools. The state agency has been sensitive to the importance of building trust and cooperation with transformation districts. It takes great care to match districts with compatible coaches, including having districts conduct coach interviews to ensure that the match is optimal.

Most of the 80 people in the state agency's District and School Transformation division serve as district coaches. Coaches received considerable training—the most training of any staff in the state agency—because they are the vanguard for the many initiatives that the state is undertaking, e.g., Common Core State and NC Essential Standards implementation, new teacher evaluation systems, new principal evaluation systems, and technology initiatives. Transformation coaches are knowledgeable about available supports and resources, so they are in a position to provide specialized support to schools. The coaches even sit in on the regional roundtables that are responsible for conducting reviews of school and district progress.

The regional roundtables are part of North Carolina's aligned support system: Statewide and regional roundtables, district and school transformation coaches, and regional leadership academies. Three levels of interlocking roundtables help to ensure cohesion, alignment, and coordination across various support initiatives throughout the state. At the top is a strategic roundtable that includes the state superintendent and senior leaders who make decisions about deploying state resources to address district and school needs. A second roundtable consists of division directors across the agency who also make decisions about deploying resources.

A third level consists of eight regional roundtables that include people working on different initiatives within a region who are responsible for conducting reviews of progress based on their day-to-day work, analyses of data in the region, and identification of trends. Communication within and across the roundtables helps to ensure that efforts are not duplicative. These multiple analyses—a combination of a top-down and bottom-up approach—help everyone stay on top of trends and understand whether improvements are being realized.
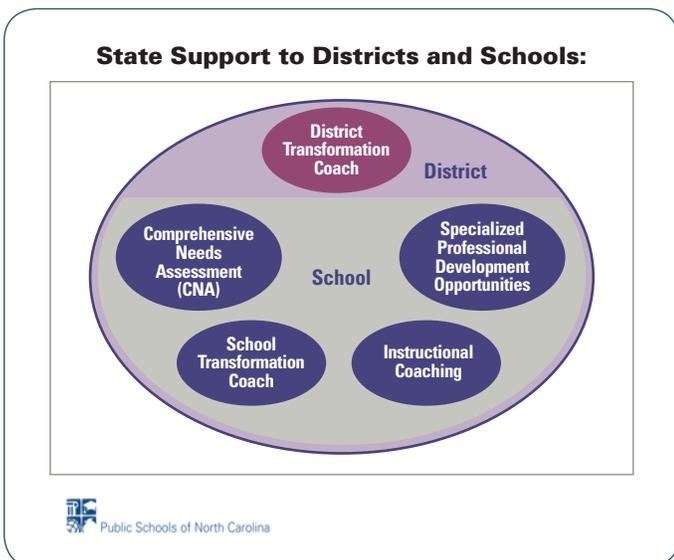
Summary: Putting it all together

As the state examples illustrate, initiatives of various types have been undertaken by states with the goal of increasing the quantity of principals who are well qualified to lead turnaround schools. From the experiences of the participating states, it is clear that action on multiple fronts is required to reach the goals of developing an adequate supply of principals to meet the demand. To organize discussion about the various actions that a state could undertake, the convening employed a framework of options for state actions, organized in four

(Source: North Carolina team presentation 2013)

(Source: North Carolina team presentation 2013)

categories: (1) state policies for school leadership; (2) recruiting and selecting talent; (3) pre-service training and residency programs; and (4) principal support and evaluation.

The principal pipeline framework on the next page can be used by states as a guide to plan systematic and intentional approaches for developing and sustaining effective school leadership. The pipeline defines a range of programs, policies, and practices that support the development of a robust principal pipeline for leading in school turnaround environments.

Framework for Turnaround Principal Pipeline Development

State Policies for School Leadership: States support high quality turnaround leadership preparation by adopting policies that effectively address leadership standards, principal program accreditation, principal certification, and principal evaluation and tenure.

- State leadership standards/competencies inform principal selection, preparation, licensure, and tenure
- Rigorous accreditation criteria for principal preparation programs, including graduate outcomes
- Rigorous principal licensure requirements aligned to leadership standards/competencies
- Rigorous principal evaluation criteria inform principal tenure and license renewal decisions
- State-provided incentives for leaders in turnaround environments
- State partnerships with universities, districts, and other principal preparation programs

Recruiting and Selecting Talent: Establish a rigorous process for choosing candidates for principal training/placement in turnaround schools.

- Rigorous selection criteria aligned to turnaround leadership competencies
- Incentives for placement and retention in low-performing schools
- Districts systematically identify talent for leadership opportunities
- Recruitment of non-traditional and diverse candidates, including those in positions outside of education

Pre-Service Training and Residency Programs: Provide aspiring principals with training that prepares them to lead a school turnaround.

- Rigorous curriculum aligned to actions and competencies of successful turnaround leaders
- Residency programs provide hands-on experience and mentoring from successful turnaround leaders
- Preparation programs confer school turnaround certification status to graduates
- Training programs provide opportunity for already successful principals to prepare for turnaround environments
- Training programs provide opportunity for participation by school leadership teams

Principal Support and Evaluation: Provide principals with high-quality mentoring, professional development, and performance evaluation.

- Mentoring and coaching programs for turnaround principals
- Professional development aligned to turnaround leadership competencies, individual needs, and evaluation data
- State education agency (SEA) and district school oversight/support focused on turnaround principal effectiveness
- Turnaround principal networks and communities of practice
- Principal evaluation aligned to leadership competencies and school outcomes

Part III:
Lessons and implications

As the examples of pipeline initiatives in Part II show, states are actively experimenting with strategies to increase the number of principals who are well-qualified to lead turnaround efforts. Even though most efforts are relatively new, lessons about the state's role are beginning to emerge. In this section the authors synthesize and reflect on the comments made by state agency staff during the peer-to-peer convening. This includes states' reports about their plans for improving their pipeline efforts, and a list of questions about leadership pipeline challenges that emerged during discussions among convening participants.

State leadership role: Adopting state policies to advance effective school leadership

Communicating urgency. State representatives described the challenges in moving school and district personnel beyond the status quo. They have had to find ways to communicate to district leaders the importance of placing effective leaders at the helm of turnaround schools, in most cases requiring the replacement of existing principals. State agencies have an important role to play in conveying urgency. One state leader from Kentucky proposed that the success of initiatives is affected both by "how quickly the state acts" and "how quickly the school leadership accepts assistance from the state."

Confusion over the process of designating low-performing status may contribute to a lack of urgency. State leaders from North Carolina identified the problems caused by the varied ways that schools in need are identified and graded by state and federal governments, including variations in which testing years are used by different initiatives.

Aligning leadership competencies and standards. The state representatives who attended the peer-to-peer convening in May 2013 have taken stronger roles in recent years to ensure that principal training and leadership coaching programs are founded on the research-based skills, competencies, and standards that are directly relevant to the turnaround role. They are motivated by the importance of common messages about what turnaround principals need to know and do. As expressed by one state leader: "Everyone needs to be on message, informed, and working on the same goals."

States are very interested in learning more about how to integrate turnaround leader competencies and standards into training and coaching programs. New Mexico has moved in this direction by requiring candidates in its Career Principal Mentorship Program to develop and implement 90-day plans that reflect the development of specific competencies. Mentorship program leaders recognize that they need to direct attention to the careful screening of mentors and principal candidates—perhaps employing behavioral event interviewing for both tasks—as well as design ways to evaluate the competencies developed during the 90-day process.

Sustainability. In several cases, Race to the Top funds and a small amount of SIG state administrative set-aside funds have been used to jump start principal pipeline initiatives—many of which have required a deep investment of time, talent, and resources. The challenges of sustaining the same level of effort are daunting, and states advise discussing options for continued support at the outset, rather than at the end, of program funding cycles. Some have earmarked state funds to continue turnaround initiatives after current funding initiatives end. Others have initiated train-the-trainer programs to provide continued on-site support, and several hope that districts will take up the effort to "grow their own" future turnaround leaders. Kentucky has identified members of a statewide think tank (state agency, IHE, and district staff) who will be trained by the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL), working in partnership with the University of Louisville. Think tank members will be responsible for building on the NISL training and working with turnaround principal candidates who are currently employed in schools.

States are coming to understand that turnaround efforts are central to all statewide school quality and reform efforts. The implication is that more can be done to integrate the training of turnaround leaders into existing principal preparation, training, and coaching programs. However, states report mixed results in attempting to influence traditional principal preparation programs, which are typically structured to impart an existing body of knowledge about school administration. By encouraging partnerships between universities and districts (sometimes using incentives to do so) and low-performing schools, state agencies provide the opportunity for college faculty to have firsthand exposure to the unique demands facing educators in low-performing schools. The expectation is that a better understanding of what it takes to lead a school turnaround effort will eventually lead to changes in college curricula.

Key questions for future exploration

❏ How can new and promising initiatives best be integrated into ongoing principal preparation and school support?

❏ What are ways to expand upon the approaches that IHEs are currently using?

❏ How can state accreditation authority be used to set and monitor standards/outcomes to improve preparation programs?

❏ What other entities can play effective roles in preparing principals?

❏ What are other options for resources (or reallocation of resources) to continue the work on principal pipeline development?

❏ What options are there for setting the bar higher for approving and renewing principal licenses?

❏ How can supply and demand data for principals inform state actions?

School leadership talent: Developing strategies for recruiting, selecting, and retaining effective turnaround leaders

Talent identification. States agree that there are ways that they can be more intentional about determining who enters the principal pipeline. Given the investment required to develop turnaround principals who will continue in those roles, states are moving in the direction of adding more rigor to candidate identification by providing districts and IHEs with more information about how to identify potential candidates based on leadership competencies and standards.

Candidate recruitment. The state representatives attending the convening reported difficulty in attracting new graduates and qualified candidates to leadership positions. They speculate that changes in aspirations of new graduates and potential candidates may be affecting the pool of available qualified principals, noting that the millennial generation's perspective on the principal's role is different from that of their peers of 20 to 30 years ago. New graduates are looking for different experiences and job satisfaction. While states are exploring innovative ways to attract and retain leaders in turnaround schools, they still struggle to create a pool of qualified candidates especially to meet the need in rural areas. The challenge has led to experimenting with new recruitment strategies, such as seeking candidates from outside the education field who have exhibited the necessary competencies, locating preparation programs in areas of high need to draw from the local resident population, and providing incentives for placement and retention.

Rigorous selection. States are interested in encouraging districts and schools to use more rigorous selection techniques when hiring principals for turnaround schools. They are beginning to recognize that effective turnaround principals possess particular characteristics or competencies associated with job success. Although there is no conclusive research showing that competencies can be identified in advance, there are suggestions from work in other fields that techniques such as the behavioral event interview may be helpful with identifying school leadership talent (see Public Impact citations in the bibliography). Options for state roles include promoting the competencies and qualities associated with effective turnaround leaders, approaching school boards to help them think about the selection process, working with district human resources staff to incorporate more rigorous hiring practices, requiring state input into the selection process, and seeking support from coaches to assess principal competencies through on-site interviews and observations. If turnaround principal preparation programs do not pay attention to the underlying competencies when admitting candidates, the eventual success of graduates in the field may be affected.

Placement and retention. Investments in the preparation of turnaround principals will be wasted if graduates do not apply to districts/schools that are low performing or do not stay in leadership positions beyond a year or two. Challenges are particularly acute in placing

and retaining principals in rural areas. For example, even with the offer of a $25,000 annual bonus, Arkansas has found no interested applicants from the pool of master principals for its available positions in rural school sites. Because principal salaries in rural schools are much lower than in more affluent districts, even the promise of a bonus may not be sufficient to retain successful leaders. States are frustrated that they have not yet found workable strategies for placing and retaining principals in rural areas and agree the issue needs more attention.

District context and conditions. While SIG and other reform efforts place an enormous amount of responsibility for school success on school building leaders, states observe that the ability of turnaround leaders to operate effectively often has much to do with the district context, including the flexibility required to make changes in conditions that have contributed to low performance. Retention of well-trained leaders depends on the climate created by district leaders and school boards. States are realizing that they need to protect their investments in turnaround leadership development by helping districts recognize their responsibilities for ensuring school progress.

Key questions for future exploration

❑ What do new graduates want from the role of principal?

❑ How do we make the job more attractive to this new generation, especially in turnaround schools?

❑ What types of incentives show promise for recruitment, placement, and retention of talent?

❑ What is the value of specialized certification for turnaround principals?

❑ What are reasonable expectations for attracting principals to high-need schools and retaining principals in turnaround roles?

❑ What types of approaches have been used successfully to attract principals to turnaround schools in rural and other high-need settings?

Turnaround principal preparation: Building effective pre-service training and residency programs

Differentiated training programs. States have learned that a single approach is not adequate for preparing principals to be leaders of turnaround schools. Preparing brand new principals requires a different strategy than training experienced principals who are learning about turnaround strategies. Adding to the skills of "sitting" principals requires different approaches (and offers different opportunities) than working with future principals in a pre-service setting. Different leadership skills are needed at different points in the turnaround process. Planning for varied options is part of developing a viable pipeline.

Some states have chosen to conduct formal assessments of needs and assets to identify resources and plan training customized to their specific requirements for principals. Typically, states have found that they need to pull together all of their resources to provide sufficient training, bringing in varied expertise from partners such as IHEs, regional educational agencies, leadership associations, and others. Several have reached out to national organizations or out-of-state universities when in-state universities are not able to offer enough expertise and support.

Relevant content. The field has learned much about turnaround competencies and strategies in the past few years and a body of research is emerging as the viable "content" for training programs, but there is much to be learned from those who are working in turnaround contexts. Given the urgency of the need to act, it is vital that training content and activities be relevant for participants and aligned with principal standards and competencies, including those associated with instructional leadership. Some states have organized focus groups with principals, teachers, superintendents, and turnaround specialists to make sure relevance is addressed during program planning, development, and implementation. Training program leaders need the flexibility to continually feed into principal training programs information about what is happening and needed "on the ground." For example, when instructors in training programs are not located in the state, they may not even be aware of barriers or emerging needs.

Preparation program effectiveness. As AREL's recent report *Operating in the Dark* suggests, most states lack policies to promote and monitor the effectiveness of school leadership preparation efforts. The flurry of new investments in turnaround principal preparation has not been matched, for the most part, with concomitant monitoring and evaluation efforts. States need to put in place a process for evaluating the outcomes of existing, traditional principal preparation programs, as well as creating a more rigorous method for assessing the results of state-initiated efforts to support turnaround principal development.

States attending the convening were alarmed about their lack of post-placement data on the effectiveness of principal training/support programs and principal performance. After listening to a presentation about AREL's report at the convening, a state team member commented: "We're surprised that we don't collect data about the number of graduates from the programs. It never occurred to us to ask what kind of results the program is getting in terms of actual placement of principals in turnaround schools."

Surprisingly, states have not collected basic information about principal supply and demand. As a result, they don't know if their supply of principals is sufficient. They also lack outcome data on principal retention that would help states determine how many candidates are needed for preparation programs.

Key questions for future exploration

❑ What are the most important features of a principal training or preparation program, e.g., internships, leadership academies?

❑ How can the results of different interventions best be captured in ways that will inform the improvements of preparation programs?

❑ What are ways to expand the approaches that IHEs are using?

❑ What other entities can play effective roles in preparing principals?

❑ How can states work with principal preparation programs at the university level so that the training provided is relevant to school turnaround leaders?

❑ What special features can be added to training programs to better prepare principals for the turnaround challenge in rural schools?

Turnaround principal support and evaluation: Enhancing and sustaining the results of pipeline efforts

Ongoing leadership coaching. Some states have invested heavily in intense principal coaching programs of a year or more in duration. In some cases, the coaching position for a principal is a full-time role, or may even involve more than one expert. The program may be so intense that the coach is operating more like a *de facto* principal, an interim stabilizing agent during the turnaround process while the current leader is on a path to developing into the principal who can lead the school forward after major improvements have been accomplished. In the case of states like Oregon, coaches are typically drawn from the ranks of retired successful principals with the experience to manage the turnaround situation. One lesson those coaches reported was that it is critical to set boundaries so that the principal-in-training is viewed as the school leader and has an authentic opportunity to learn and exercise leadership skills.

There is much yet to be learned about the effectiveness of intense coaching models, especially about the long-term cost benefits, and from the comparisons of results from different coaching models.

Appropriate evaluation of training/coaching programs. The evaluation of training providers and coaches in many states focuses solely on delivery (e.g., How many hours of coaching were provided? Did the training, handbook, or course materials address content relevant to principal development?) rather than the outcomes of training (e.g., What did participants learn? Can they demonstrate proficiency in critical competency areas? Are they staying in their turnaround positions?).

Some states have designed assessments to measure the effectiveness of leadership academies, while others have asked their regional agency partners to track data related to principal competencies and turnover in priority schools and "focus schools" (as defined in a state's approved *ESEA* flexibility request). In some cases, coaches have been asked to collect data from principals on how long they have been principals, how many years they have been at their schools, and whether they were assigned to or chose the school.

The states participating in the convening are trying to figure out which data they should collect to show outcomes related to principals' actions. Several states are looking into performance assessments to ensure that capacities have been developed. Arkansas is planning to ask for an "endorsement" of principals who have completed a program in an effort to ensure the quality of potential candidates and to review the track records of those who have graduated from IHE preparation programs and the state's leadership academy.

Turnaround leader success. As states develop and implement new principal evaluation systems, it will be important to ensure that systems provide meaningful and fair evaluations of principal performance in low-performing schools. States must be careful that the new system does not harbor disincentives that might keep principals from serving in low-performing schools, or inappropriately contribute to the already unacceptably high rates of principal attrition in these schools. States are very interested in aligning principal evaluations with the leadership competencies and standards vital to success in turnaround schools.

Key questions for future exploration

❑ How can turnaround principal competencies be used to evaluate performance and training programs?

❑ What can states learn from other business sectors about assessing leadership training and performance?

❑ What are the ways to gather meaningful data on a school leader's growth?

❑ How can principal evaluation systems be better aligned with turnaround leader competencies?

❑ How can the results of different interventions best be captured in ways that will inform improvements of preparation programs?

❑ What can we learn from the experiences of executive coaches about the skills that are needed at different stages in the turnaround process?

❑ What can we learn from the experiences of executive coaches about the skills that are needed by turnaround principals in rural schools?

Appendix

Summary of Peer-to-Peer State Convening: Developing and Sustaining Effective Leaders for Turnaround Efforts

The May 2013 convening discussed in this paper focused on identifying specific approaches states are carrying out to increase the quality and quantity of turnaround leaders. Although research has shown that leadership is crucial to the success of turnaround efforts, finding effective school leaders has been a challenge for many states. This convening was designed to address this urgency by helping states learn from each other and experts about approaches for developing and sustaining effective principals who have the unique competencies necessary to lead turnaround schools.

Five state teams attended the two-day convening held by the Office of School Turnaround (OST) in Washington, D.C. State teams included three to five members, such as SIG directors, school improvement coordinators, school transformation staff, *Title I* and RTT coordinators, and associate commissioners. Expert presentations described the research and addressed key issues facing states. States described their approaches to principal development, and facilitated discussions provided states with the opportunity to raise questions and share information about what they are currently doing. Through peer-to-peer discussions, states were able to learn about how others have dealt with roadblocks to implementation and ask for feedback on their plans and the challenges ahead.

Convening goals for states included:
- Learning about turnaround principal development, including the use of an organizing framework; discussions of other states' initiatives and progress; presentations on current research about effective turnaround principals; and a review of collaborative benchmarking approaches for improvement.
- Receiving technical assistance in analyzing their initiatives and adapting ideas into their processes for improvements, including identifying next steps, additional information that would facilitate improvements, and desired supports for implementation.
- Establishing relationships with regional comprehensive center staff and others for ongoing support for states.
- Providing opportunities for participation in follow-up activities, including collaborative benchmarking and a virtual community of practice with the other participating states.

Day 1 began with a brief overview of OST technical assistance and an outline of the first day's objectives, which included building a common foundation around a principal pipeline framework and grounding in research and policy; learning about each state's goals, progress, and challenges; and identifying cross-cutting issues. States also were introduced

to options for follow-up technical assistance activities, such as joining a virtual principal pipeline community of practice with other states and participating in a collaborative benchmarking process.

Day 1 morning activities concentrated on building a common foundation and understanding among participants, beginning with a review of the principal pipeline framework and its components (included here on p. 20 in "*Summary: Putting it all together*"). That was followed by expert presentations on current research on school turnaround leader actions and competencies and the role of state policies in principal development. In the afternoon, each state presented highlights of its pipeline initiatives, challenges, lessons learned, and shared questions about what they wanted to learn from others. At the end of the day, state teams met to begin work on planning and refining their principal pipeline activities.

Day 2 began with a panel discussion of cross-cutting themes and issues that emerged during Day 1, followed by a presentation about a future collaborative benchmarking process. The majority of the second day was dedicated to providing time for peer-to-peer discussions and feedback, as well as time for individual state teams to work on action plans for improving pipeline initiatives. The day ended with a discussion about ways to improve the SIG program.

Developing and Sustaining Effective Leaders for Turnaround Efforts

May 15-16, 2013 Washington, DC

AGENDA *(abbreviated version)*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

LEARNING ABOUT FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH, STATE GOALS, AND EXPERIENCES

9–9:35 a.m.   **Welcome & Overview of OST Technical Assistance**
Carlas McCauley, group leader, Office of School Turnaround, U.S. Dept. of Education
Fred Tempes, director, Center on School Turnaround
Tim Field, co-principal investigator, Principal Leadership Pipeline, Center on Great Teachers and Leaders
Tom Kerins, implementation liaison, Building State Capacity and Productivity Center

9:35–9:45 a.m.   **Framework: Developing Principals for Turnaround Schools**
Chris Dwyer, senior vice president, RMC Research

9:45–10:45 a.m.   **Research: School Turnaround Leader Actions and Competencies**
Tim Field, co-principal investigator, Principal Leadership Pipeline, Center on Great Teachers and Leaders

11 a.m.–noon   **Research: Role of State Policies in Principal Development**
Jacquelyn Davis, fellow, George W. Bush Institute

1–2:30 pm.   **State Presentations with Discussions**
Moderator: **Chris Dwyer**, senior vice president, RMC Research
Presenting States: Kentucky, North Carolina, and Arkansas

2:45–4:15 p.m.   **State Presentations with Discussions**
Moderator: **Peggy Simon**, senior research associate, RMC Research
Presenting States: Oregon, New Mexico, and Ohio

4:15–5 p.m.   **SEA Team Work Time**

THURSDAY, MAY 16

DEVELOPING NEXT STEPS WITH FEEDBACK

9–9:45 a.m. **Panel: Reflections on Cross-Cutting Themes & Issues**
Carlas McCauley, group leader, Office of School Turnaround, U.S. Dept. of Education
Fred Tempes, director, Center on School Turnaround
Dan Player, academic and research director, Partners for Leadership in Education, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

9:45–10:30 a.m. **Pipeline Development: Ideas from Business**
Sarah Brasiel, knowledge manager, Building State Capacity and Productivity Center

10:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m. **SEA Team Work Time and State Teams Dialogue**

1:30–2:15 p.m. **Sharing Plans for Next Steps**

2:15–3 p.m. **Ideas for SIG Reregulation: Reactions & Comments**
Carlas McCauley, group leader, Office of School Turnaround, U.S. Dept. of Education

3–3:30 p.m. **Conclusion and Next Steps**
Carlas McCauley, group leader, Office of School Turnaround, U.S. Dept. of Education

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