Indicator Explanation

DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Talent	Target professional learning opprtunities	2B.1 The school demonstrates strategic management of human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the school's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Explanation. The evidence review confirms that low performing schools can experience rapid and sustainable growth when an LEA grants greater autonomies and flexibilities to those entities. An LEA should allow the school leadership to identify and respond to its students' unique needs by extending decision-making authorities in the areas of its building budget, scheduling, and hiring.

Questions. What process will the Complex/school use to examine its current governance practices? How will the Complex transfer budget autonomies to school level leaders? How will the Complex transfer time and scheduling autonomies to school level leaders? How will the Complex transfer personnel including hiring, evaluation, and dismissal autonomies to school level leaders?

The Complex should provide schools with flexibility in budgeting, scheduling, and staffing. Programs, expenditures, schedules and staffing should promote the transformation. Consider time the most expensive resource.

Providing Flexibility in Staffing, Scheduling, Budget
State legislatures, governors, state boards of education, SEAs, and districts are uniquely positioned to create the conditions for change. As a result, states and districts also need to attend to the opportunities that state and district policy providers for districts and schools to do what they need to do to improve student performance. According to the Mass Insight Education & Research Institute's The Turnaround Challenge, "States and districts focused inside the system" (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 11). Its top lesson learned from high performing, high-poverty schools is, "Clearly defined authority to act based on what's best for children and learning – i.e., flexibility and control over staffing, scheduling, budget, and curriculum" (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 11).

Flexibility can take many forms. Schedules might be modified to accommodate longer school days or years to provide longer periods for some subjects or to set aside time for teachers to meet to discuss student work. Schools might elect to allocate money to hire extra reading teachers or curriculum coordinators or use some funds to pay teachers for extra hours spent examining and discussion data or engaging in professional development activities. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (2003) states that, for the best likelihood of sustained improvement, "the school has control over the majority of its budget. To the extent possible all funds from different sources are combined and directed in support of school goals."

In a case study of improvement in the Kansas City, Kansas schools, Lane (2009) found that one of the key strategies supporting dramatic improvement was providing schools with "defined autonomy," in which principals had flexibility and control in the areas of staffing, budget, and scheduling. Specifically, to help them address the challenges of increased accountability, principals and teachers were given autonomy to decide how best to implement improvement activities in their schools. For example, to facilitate changes in staffing and scheduling, the district and the teachers' union added a provision to the teachers' contract, "contract flex," that allowed on a school-by-school basis" (p. 28). This required that the central office place considerable trust in local school staff, but the defined autonomy engendered "an atmosphere of trust and an emerging culture of improvement" (p. 29) and also "reinforced the idea that the district and schools share the responsibility for what happens in schools and in classroom" (p. 32). The district set non-negotiable goals, but allowed schools the latitude to decide for themselves how best to attain those goals.

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