The Virginia Story

CII ~ Promising Practices

Forging Strong Working Relationships Among the State, District, School, and External Lead Partners for the Implementation of School Improvement Grants

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A Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) is hired to implement a school improvement model in a persistently low-achieving school, but what's the next step? What's the best way to start implementation? Who leads the process? How is a good working relationship with the external Lead Turnaround Partner, the district, the school, and the state created? What's working and what's not working across the country?

As Federal School Improvement Grant funds are distributed, there is an eagerness to learn from early experiences implementing the four federal school improvement models (turnaround, restart, closure, and transformation). School Improvement Grants (SIGs) have been allocated to states to fund school improvement efforts since 2007, and the 2010 federal guidance included several new requirements. States and districts have been working to improve schools for years, but these new mandates significantly changed the game by requiring new oversight roles at the state level, and increased implementation capacity at the district and school level. As a result, most state education agencies are building the plane while flying. While it's too early to identify best practices, there are some promising practices emerging in the field.

The Virginia Department of Education's Office of School Improvement is asking the right questions: what practices and strategies should we implement at the state level to ensure that SIG dollars are used efficiently to increase the likelihood of success and to guarantee that the results are sustainable? In this brief, some of the practices that Virginia is using and that could be adopted by other states are highlighted. In particular, this report describes Virginia's strategies for forging strong working relationships among the state, district, school, and Lead Turnaround Partners.

Context/Background:

In 2010, Virginia received $59.8 million through the federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) program to raise student achievement in the commonwealth's persistently lowest-achieving schools. The funds are part of the $3.5 billion in school-improvement funding for states in the 2009 federal budget and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Like all states, districts in Virginia must implement one of the following four federally defined improvement models in their persistently lowest-achieving schools:

- Turnaround Model: Replace the principal, screen existing school staff, and rehire no more than half the teachers; adopt a new governance structure; and improve the school through curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.

- Restart Model: Convert a school or close it and re-open it as a charter school or under an education management organization.

- School Closure: Close the school and send the students to higher-achieving schools in the district.

- Transformation Model: Replace the principal and improve the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is managing the School Improvement Grant program through the Office of School Improvement (OSI). In the Commonwealth, local districts are called divisions and are responsible for applying for SIG funds on behalf of eligible schools. An Internal Lead Partner (ILP) is a staff member of the division who oversees and manages implementation at the local level. The ILP is also responsible for acting as the liaison between school leadership and an external Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) that is hired to guide the improvement process. Together, the ILP, representative(s) from the external LTP, and school leadership form the local team in charge of making decisions and driving the implementation of the selected improvement model.

VDOE released a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2009 to recruit Lead Turnaround Partners to work in some of the state's lowest achieving schools. (A link to the RFP is included in the Reference section.) Mass Insight Education & Research Institute's *The Turnaround Challenge* report and supporting resources provided the framework for the RFP and LTP job description. Two VDOE staff members and three local superintendents evaluated the responses against the rubric included in the RFP.

Concurrently, the OSI staff analyzed performance data of individual schools and created a list of the lowest-achieving five percent of all Title I eligible or Title I schools (Tier I and II). While some of the schools had recently made progress—and possibly Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP)—they were still included in the cohort of schools that would be targeted for the SIG interventions. All schools then applied for federal School Improvement Grant dollars, with the understanding that in order to receive funds, implementation of one of the federally prescribed intervention models was necessary. Any school that planned to implement the turnaround or transformation models was also required to select an external LTP to guide the work.

Each approved LTP then had the opportunity to make presentations to the division staff during a series of four webinars. Some divisions also requested individual presentations by the vendors before selecting a partner. Each division could select one LTP from the contracted list to work with their schools, or they could choose to select another partner through their own procurement process. Staff

Statistics for Schools in Tier I & II

Lead Turnaround Partners applied	17
Lead Turnaround Partners approved	4
Lead Turnaround Partners selected	4
Schools implementing Turnaround Model	0
Schools implementing Restart Model	5
Schools implementing Closure Model	2
Schools implementing Transformation Model	11
Total schools receiving SIG funds	59*
Total divisions receiving SIG funds	33

* The remaining 41 schools are using an intervention strategy that requires participation in the College of William & Mary's model for district intervention.

from the division, the LTP, and the VDOE then developed the official contracts/MOUs that govern each partnership. (An example of one of the contracts is included in the Reference Section.)

Promising Practices

All states are distributing SIG funds and implementing the various reform models this year, but Virginia is asking the right questions and modifying the process as needed. Based on the state's flexibility and the leadership in the Office of School Improvement (OSI), several promising practices are emerging. States will need to adapt the processes to their local contexts, but many of the following promising practices could be used in any environment. The promising practices are separated into three main categories: Communication, Hiring & Staffing, and State Oversight & Assistance.

Communication

Start Early & Convene the Key Players

Virginia received approval of its portion of federal dollars at the end of May 2010. A great deal of work planning the improvement models, hiring additional staff as needed, and educating the local divisions was consolidated over the summer months. Because OSI had earlier created the preferred partner list, and divisions had already selected their partners, the teams were able to make progress in the remaining weeks of the summer.

In late July, OSI, in conjunction with the Virginia Foundation for Education Leadership, sponsored a week-long Summer Institute for division staff, the ILP, principals, and the LTPs. VDOE staff, external consultants, and national experts facilitated the sessions and topics included: Indistar® training, planning and program assessment, formative assessment overview, governance models, instructional and school support strategies, mentor training, and curriculum alignment. A link to a more detailed agenda is included in the references.

The Summer Institute provided the opportunity for the local teams to begin developing rapport, working relationships, and action plans for implementation, but also the chance to establish the standards and processes that VDOE believed were necessary for efficient and effective implementation. Having all of the relevant parties together at one time allowed the state to demonstrate best and

promising practices for the strategies it deemed essential. The Summer Institute laid the foundation for the improvement efforts, and specific topic areas would be further addressed through a series of technical assistance sessions held during the school year. (See page 8 for more information on the technical assistance sessions.)

A Lesson Learned

Although the principals attending the retreat were aware of their inclusion in the improvement cohort, they were not informed of the required significant changes, and that an external partner would be involved in every aspect of school operations. The division staff had written the School Improvement Grant applications and selected the external LTPs. Some principals were rather shocked and unhappy about the lack of communication prior to the Institute.

The lesson learned from this situation is to ensure that if the current principal will remain in the school (which may happen in the case of exceptions to the transformation and turnaround models), he/she must be included in the application and planning process, and in the selection of a partner. If the principal is being replaced, the improvement process should be clearly explained to all candidates applying for the open position. The division's negligence in properly informing the school leadership of the conditions of the grants may have been due, in part, to the short timeline provided for submitting SIG applications. In the future, the state should build some type of assurance that communication has taken place during the application process. Even if it is uncertain that the school will receive SIG funds, any remaining school leadership members must be aware of the potential changes.

Clearly Define Roles & Responsibilities

OSI developed job descriptions, MOUs, and contracts that clearly defined the roles and responsibilities necessary for implementing the School Improvement Grants. Despite this work being completed before implementation began, the local teams (composed of the school leadership, the ILP, and the LTP) struggled to figure out how to, and who should, do the actual work. Some teams established strong relationships early on and are dividing and conquering quite well, but others struggle with who is responsible, who is accountable, and who has the right skill-sets to do the work. Teams have been encouraged by OSI to communicate on a more frequent basis and to develop an action plan that includes goals, metrics for evaluation, and deadlines. They also needed to identify a leader and supporting personnel for each step in the work plan. Until the team members learn each other's strengths and weaknesses and how to work with each other, this level of planning and clear division of responsibilities is necessary. OSI took the right steps to establish and define each partnership up front, and local teams must figure out how to get the work done in the field.

As OSI has done in the past, all SIG reward letters included a set of conditions for receipt of the funds. While past letters have included a few mandates, this year's letter included detailed requirements for the district (listed on page 4). Defining these conditions early has helped alleviate some access and territory issues that would have likely developed during the beginning of implementation.

Timeline

Late Oct. 2009	Early Dec. 2009	March 2010	March 2010	March 2010	May 2010	April-June 2010	July 2010	July 2010	July 2010	July 2010
RFP released	RFPs due	Approved partner list released	Schools part of Tier I & II released	SIG application released	SIG application due	Partner presentations	SIG awards	Partner selection	All contracts/MOUs complete	Summer planning retreat

Conditions for Grant Award, School Division Support

The school division recognizes that a successful turnaround program is dependent upon the Internal Lead Partner (ILP) and the school leadership acting as a team, in conjunction with the external Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP). In support of an effective partnership, the school division in Virginia is responsible for the following:

1. Appointing an Internal Lead Partner to represent the school division in the partnership with the External Lead Partner who has the authority to support the External Lead Partner in implementing the 25 requirements of the RFP.

2. Providing access to all school system educational materials and student assessment materials; (i.e. Voyager, iStation, Achieve 3000, Read-180, Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Assessment, longitudinal SOL test data).

3. Providing a copy of the School Board Policy Manual and Regulations to include grading policies, dress codes, and code of conduct.

4. Providing staff handbooks and copies of all evaluation instruments and samples of teacher and principal contracts.

5. Providing copies of student handbooks.

6. Providing a list of all partnerships with outside agencies or community-based organizations with names of contacts.

7. Providing a list of other consultants/vendors providing academic support and set initial meeting with these providers.

8. Involving the LTP when making decisions on replacing the principal and in every stage of any subsequent recruitment and interview process.

9. Involving the LTP when identifying and rewarding school leaders, teachers, and other staff who have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates.

10. Involving the LTP in the development of strategies to help ensure/increase retention of high quality instructional and administrative personnel.

11. Involving the LTP in the administration of an appraisal system that identifies principals and teachers who have been successful and unsuccessful in reaching improvement objectives with regards to student achievement.

12. Working with the LTP to develop a high quality, job embedded professional development program that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school faculty.

13. Working with the LTP to establish a plan for improving parental involvement in support of teaching and learning in schools.

14. Establishing a communication plan with the LTP to ensure that both parties (school district and LTP) are kept abreast of all issues relevant to the improvement process and to forestall any problems that may arise.

15. Implementing all conditions of the selected U.S. Department of Education (USDE) Model.

Despite the best planning, adjustments will be necessary throughout implementation. This is especially true for State Education Agencies that are overseeing such a large program with so many requirements, many of which are new responsibilities.

Over the summer, OSI established deadlines for LTPs and school teams to submit action plans and a timeline for various report submissions. Initially, OSI requested that work plans cover the three-year intervention process, with detailed information on the first year. Within a few weeks, multiple problems emerged. First, the Indistar® Indicators of Effective Practice framework, in place in many Virginia divisions since 2007, was different than the LTP requirements included in the original RFP, which some teams had been using to guide their first few months of work. Second, while some teams hit the ground running, others struggled to establish consistent communication with each other and to develop their action plans for the first year.

Based on the needs in the field, OSI staff adjusted the schedule and required schools with LTPs to select one of two frameworks, either the Lead Turnaround Partner Requirements (from the RFP) or the Center on Innovation & Improvement's (CII) Transformation Toolkit (see explanation of the Transformation Toolkit below). Schools in Tier III were required to select the Indistar® Indicators of Effective Practice.

To support the LTP schools, teams struggling with the beginning steps of implementation were first asked to complete thirty-day work plans to help focus their efforts and strategies a few weeks at a time. Second, OSI staff contacted CII and the Lead Turnaround Partner Requirements were added to the Indistar® system. Teams were then required to write a comprehensive plan using the indicators from the Transformation Toolkit or the Lead Turnaround Partner Requirements.

A Lesson Learned

Virginia corrected the indicator problem by making sure that each LTP school was focused on the work required by the transformation model. Rather than continue with plans already in place (based on the Indistar® Indicators of Effective Practice), teams were asked to develop new plans that were based on either the Transformation Toolkit or the LTP Requirements. The confusion about the school improvement plans in Virginia is likely happening across the country. The presence of an existing plan, in addition to the requirements of the USDE models, was confusing. For several years, the same schools were told to use a different set of indicators. Although the indicators from the previous years were aligned to the transformation model, there was no specific focus on strategies or condition changes required to meet federal guidelines. The Indistar® system is being used by dozens of schools and divisions in the Commonwealth, with varying needs, so the system was not designed to exclusively support the transformation model.

Analysis & Action

Early on, some division and school staff expressed frustration about aspects of the improvement efforts and stated that the process was uncomfortable. This work will be uncomfortable at times—the LTPs may be encouraging and forcing changes to how things have always been done. This should be the case. How things have been done in the past has not worked for a subset of schools, and, in effect, staff at the district and school levels must change practices and structures.

During implementation, constant analysis of progress against short-term and long-term goals is necessary. If a practice is not working, or if there are increasing personality conflicts, the team needs to step back and examine why the practice isn't working, or why the personalities are not meshing.

Frameworks Available for Work Plans

- **Indistar® Indicators of Effective Practice:** Specific, plain language guideposts, aligned with research. The indicators can be easily assessed, clearly aligned with people responsible, set to timelines, coached, and tracked for high-quality implementation.
- **Transformation Toolkit:** Indicators based on the Center on Innovation & Improvement's Transformation Toolkit. These indicators are the required actions for the implementation of the transformation model as required by USDE. These indicators should be used by those schools in Tier I and II that do not have one of the four Virginia approved Lead Turnaround Partners, and may be used by schools that do have one of the four Virginia approved Lead Turnaround Partners.
- **Lead Turnaround Partner Requirements:** Indicators based on the VA RFP for Lead Turnaround Partners. These indicators are the required actions for the implementation of the transformation model or the restart model as required by the RFP and USDE. These indicators should be used by those schools in Tier I and II that have one of the four Virginia approved Lead Turnaround Partners.

There will be times that a strategy or practice isn't the right one for a specific school, and cases that it's just the wrong person for the job. But, there will be also times when the practice isn't successful, or the personalities aren't working because the changes are uncomfortable. If the former is the problem, then a mid-course correction or staffing change may be necessary. But, if it's the latter, the team needs to come together, examine the root of the problem, and develop an action plan to fix it. Implementing any of the four school improvement models will not be easy and adjustments over the course of implementation will be necessary.

Hiring & Staffing

Selection of LTP Field Staff

Having the right LTP representatives on the ground leading the work is crucial to the success of implementation. Some LTPs assigned staff to each school and/or division, while other LTPs used a more collaborative process. The latter allowed the LTP to retain control of the process, but encouraged the participation of the school and division staff. In these cases, the LTP pre-approved a group of consultants/staff who could lead the work with the schools. The school and division staff then had the opportunity to interview the candidates and select a consultant they thought best fit the local context. Schools and divisions that had the ability to select their LTP field staff felt much more a part of the process and tended to experience fewer personality conflicts at the beginning of implementation.

Principal Changes

Having a strong school principal is integral to the success of a school improvement initiative. Replacing the principal is generally required for the turnaround and transformation school improvement models, but there are some exceptions to this requirement. If a principal change is required, before or during implementation, the LTP should be part of the development of the job description, the recruitment and screening of candidates, the interview process, and the final decision-making. In Virginia's case, the local school board has the sole authority to hire and fire school staff, but the LTP needs to be able to work with the school principal, and he/she must be receptive to the model and have the skill-set to implement the changes.

Internal Lead Partner

Along with the requirement to use a Lead Turnaround Partner, the state also requires all districts to identify an Internal Lead Partner[1]. This person is a district staff

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[1] The definitions of an Internal Lead Partner in Virginia and from Mass Insight Education & Research Institute are different. According to Mass Insight, an Internal Lead Partner is a carve-out office from the district central structure that oversees and manages a subset of turnaround schools. Essentially, the ILP is an external LTP that is still part of the district.

member who facilitates the implementation process. He/She acts as the liaison between the LTP and the district superintendent, and has direct contact with the state facilitator as well. In small districts, the ILP may be the district superintendent, but in larger districts, the ILP is a full-time position. Over time, the ILP position in a large district may evolve to become a separate office with multiple staff to assist a subset of low-performing schools. In more rural regions, the ILP position may shift into a regional collaborative or a shared position between a few districts.

Internal Lead Partner: Job Description

- Manage and oversee the implementation of the Turnaround School Improvement Grant.
- Manage and procure appropriate services from the External Lead Partner and other support services that may be available to the school.
- Manage and help develop the strategic direction and performance of the Turnaround School.
- Liaise with the External Lead Partner, central office, and DOE.
- Deliver direct services and manage delivery of services from the External Lead Partner.
- Work closely with the principal and central office to support the day-to-day needs of the school. Discuss progress and barriers with the principal and key central office staff on a regular basis.
- Ensure alignment between External Lead Partner, other support services, school, central office, and DOE.
- Manage key program functions for the school, including:
  - Personnel
    - Actively participate in the recruiting and hiring process for the school
  - Curriculum and Instruction
  - Administration and Finances
    - Involve district level executives in all major decisions
    - Control over the school level budget
  - Community Advocacy
  - Data Analysis and Evaluation
    - Document all practices and collect and analyze data
    - Track student performance data as well as other indicators
  - Reallocation of resources

State Oversight & Assistance

Infrastructure

Overseeing improvement efforts in dozens of schools and numerous districts across a state requires sound infrastructure. The Office of School Improvement is using a variety of systems to facilitate and streamline data collection, file sharing, and reporting mechanisms.

Indistar®, created and managed by CII, is being used by ten states and the Bureau of Indian Education for the 2010-11 school year. The online portal allows local teams (district, school, and LTP staff) to track, develop, coordinate, and report improvement activities. A number of evidence-based practices and indicators are provided to inform improvement efforts, but the system can also be customized to reflect the user's own indicators of effective practice or rubrics for assessment. Indistar® can be used for all schools and also allows the client to differentiate subsets of schools (i.e., a zone or cluster) so that a separate set of indicators can be used as needed.

Indistar® is used to collect meeting minutes, professional development activities, strategies for extending learning opportunities, and parent activities as well as indicators of effective leadership and instructional practice. The system includes an electronic repository for planning and implementation materials for the teams and also allows the state facilitators and other OSI staff members to access the materials as they're created at the local level and provide coaching comments. Virginia's portion of the Indistar® platform includes CII's research-aligned indicators, as well as indicators from the Center's Transformation Toolkit, and the LTP Requirements. Indistar® also provides online tutorials on the indicators (Indicators in Action), including video of teachers, principals, and teams demonstrating the indicators. Many of the videos are from Virginia schools.

iStation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP) is an online computer adaptive testing (CAT) system that administers short tests to determine each student's overall reading ability. The system adjusts the difficulty of questions based on performance and tracks the performance of individual students, classrooms, and the school over time. Students are assessed monthly and then grouped by tiers and skill need. The system can be used in conjunction with the iStation reading program.

The Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT) was developed by VDOE and Internet Testing Systems (ITS). The computer adaptive testing system assesses students' proficiency in mathematics and draws from a pool of over 2000 test items. The results are immediately available, and targeted students are able to take additional strand and grade level assessments for diagnostic purposes.

OSI has access to the reports from both programs, and staff can track results from the state level. iStation automatically reports student achievement each month and ARDT reports each quarter. Mandating that all schools receiving SIG funds use the same assessment systems allows VDOE to better monitor progress throughout the school year and over the course of the interventions.

State Facilitators

The Office of School Improvement developed a new position to support the improvement efforts. Five state facilitators were hired to act as the main liaisons between the districts and the state. The state facilitators monitor progress and are able to problem solve with the district teams as issues arise.

The state facilitators are also able to share common issues across the state. Since OSI learns about issues as they emerge, staff members are then able to resolve any problems in a timely manner. The facilitators provide OSI an on-the-ground perspective that allows for more frequent communication and stronger support services.

VDOE Liaison/State Facilitator: Job Description

- Work with the superintendent and school division Leadership Team to develop, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of LTP's scope of work.

- Coordinate with the VDOE Office of School Improvement to provide technical assistance in support of the contract with the LTP.

- Assist with the administration of the 1003(g) grant and approve all expenditures of the grant.

- Meet, at a minimum, monthly with the Division Superintendent to discuss progress of each school.

- Meet bi-weekly with the Division Leadership Team, to include LTP representative, to review Division Action Plan; monitor and adjust plan as needed. This is a time to review quarterly reports and student achievement.

- Provide monthly reports to the VDOE Office of School Improvement.

- Attend meetings with LTP, ITP that are required by the Office of School Improvement.

- Visit each school with Division Leadership Team to assess implementation of the Action Plan and assess the school's participation and support of the Action Plan.

Group Technical Assistance Sessions

In most cases, the work that school principals and district staff were about to undergo required different skill-sets and resources than had been used in past improvement efforts. Many of the LTPs had managed or had been strongly involved in the management of school improvement efforts in the past, but the prescriptive requirements of the turnaround and transformation models would require changes, some significant, to the LTP models.

Once the divisions had selected their LTPs, it was clear that a steep learning curve was about to begin. In order to keep the implementation moving throughout the upcoming school year and to remind the LTPs of all of the required pieces of the transformation model, OSI decided to hold a series of group technical assistance sessions for the school principals, the ILPs, and the LTPs. These group technical assistance sessions are in addition to a variety of other technical assistance opportunities and services that OSI provides to schools and divisions.

Each of the five sessions highlights one or two strands of the Transformation Toolkit (the guide created by CII). The sessions take place throughout the course of the 2010-11 school year and are led by an external education reform consultant. The meetings also provide an opportunity for teams to share their promising practices and lessons learned. Local teams are often isolated from each other, and sharing strategies and issues can not only increase morale, but can also create a more efficient process by sharing lessons learned.

Each session provides examples of implementation strategies for each strand and each indicator. The sessions present a variety of ideas and questions that the local teams should think about as the work plans are created. For example, one of the indicators within the Moving Towards School Autonomy section (Strand B) is to "Consider establishing a turnaround office or zone." Materials and discussion are then used to further develop the idea: what supports do the school and the LTP need from the division? Which division staff members are most crucial to the success of implementation? If a carve-out zone is not needed (or is not feasible due to a division's size), how can the relationships be formalized? What steps should be taken to ensure sustainability if there are leadership changes at the division level? How are responsibilities divided and shared? How would a carve-out zone structure look? What would a timeline for implementation of a separate turnaround office include?

Technical Assistance Session Schedule

- September 20, 2010
  - Strand B: Moving Towards School Autonomy
  - Strand G: Leading Change
- November 12, 2010
  - Strand D: Working with Stakeholders & Building Support
  - Strand H: Evaluating, Rewarding, & Removing Staff
- January 11, 2011
  - Strand K: Reforming Instruction
- March 14, 2011
  - Strand I: Providing Rigorous Staff Development
  - Strand J: Increasing Learning Time
- April 26, 2011
  - Reflections and Planning for 2011-12

Incentives

In addition to receiving a large federal grant to fund the improvement efforts, the schools and divisions are also eligible for additional services and programs. VDOE is using this select group of schools to pilot various programs. For example, faculty and staff at the College of William & Mary have developed a variety of value-added teacher evaluation models that need to be tested in the field. OSI will provide funding to a few schools to pilot the different models to spur innovation in these schools, but to also refine the models for statewide scale-up. Providing these schools additional opportunities and services can not only concentrate reform efforts in a few places, but it can also help schools and districts feel that they are being helped despite the fact they have been publicly labeled because of persistent low achievement. As with any program or practice that is implemented in a SIG school, the leadership team must ensure that the new program aligns with the rest of the improvement efforts and the transformation/turnaround plan.

Conclusion

While all State Education Agencies have provided oversight of School Improvement Grant funds in the past, this year's more prescriptive federal guidance implies that SEAs must provide increased oversight and support to schools receiving funds. Virginia's Office of School Improvement has the autonomy and authority to provide support to this subset of schools, while also mandating certain actions at the local level.

Virginia was among the first states to get approval from the U. S. Department of Education for its SIG plan and made use of this time to convene the key players in a summer session. Virginia also planned for continuous contact with the key players to build their working relationships, detect difficulties, and make adjustments in course. Use of CII's Transformation Toolkit to guide the state's technical assistance provides a straight-forward process for implementation and a way to monitor progress.

Virginia has also called upon a number of federally funded resources and national experts. Two consultants from CII helped plan and presented at the Summer Institute, and there is little hesitation to utilize external resources or consultants that could improve the quality of improvements and the effectiveness of implementation. The Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) also completed a number of focus groups to review the techni-

cal assistance services available to divisions. The findings of ARCC's work were then used to improve the supports and services offered to schools and divisions for the 2010-11 school year. Recognizing that OSI staff might not have all the answers or the time to take on additional responsibilities allows VDOE staff to concentrate on their roles, while also providing needed services and supports to the local teams.

OSI leadership has created an environment that not only allows for open and candid discussion about the intervention models, but also the implementation process. As issues with the process or the infrastructure develop, they are resolved in a timely manner. This flexibility and awareness creates a stronger process for this and future years, and also increases the chances of better and more sustainable outcomes in the long run.

References & Additional Resources

Center on Innovation & Improvement

- Transformation Toolkit
  http://centerii.org/resources/Transformation_Toolkit-0409.pdf

- Indistar®
  http://www.indistar.org/

Corbett, Julie. *Building autonomy and enabling strong leadership*. Presentation sponsored by Virginia Department of Education, September 20, 2010. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/tier1_tier2_meeting_sep_2010/building_autonomy_leadership.pdf

- iStation
  http://www2.istation.com/

Turnbaugh, Anne and Steve Fleischman. Choosing a school turnaround provider. Education Northwest. *Lessons Learned, 1*(3). Retrieved from http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/1294

Mass Insight Education & Research Institute

- The Turnaround Challenge and supporting resources
  http://www.massinsight.org/stg/research/

Virginia Department of Education

- Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test
  http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/mathematics/middle/algebra_readiness/index.shtml#diagnostic

- Sample MOU/contract between Cambridge Education (Lead Turnaround Partner) and the Petersburg City School Board
  http://petersburg.k12.va.us/modules/groups/homepage-files/cms/944092/File/Superintendent/REVISED-MOU%20Agreement%20with%20Lead%20Turnaround%20Partner%20Cambridge%20July%20201.pdf

- Request for Proposals to Low Achieving Schools Turnaround Partners

  http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/tier1_tier2_meeting_apr_2010/rfp_low_achieving_schools.pdf

- School Improvement Grant information and applications
  http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/title1/1003_g/div_apps/division_apps.shtml

- Summer Institute information, Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership
  http://www.edleader.org/

Disclosures:

Corbett Education Consulting is providing the Technical Assistance sessions for the VDOE Office of School Improvement.

The Indistar® system, created and managed by the Center on Innovation & Improvement, has been used in Virginia since 2007.

Resources from the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers

See the School Improvement Grant section of the Center on Innovation & Improvement's website at: www.centerii.org. For help in deciding which model is best, see *Selecting an Intervention Model and Partners/External Providers* at: www.centerii.org. Also see the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* and the Power Points and pre-recorded webinars on the models at www.centerii.org.

See the websites of the national content centers and regional comprehensive centers for many resources related to school improvement and transformation. A directory of national content center websites is available at: http://www.centerii.org/ncc/ . A directory of regional comprehensive center websites is available at: http://www.centerii.org/rcc/

Toolkit for Implementing the
School Improvement Grant Transformation Model
Center on Innovation & Improvement

(available at www.centerii.org)

Also, for information about CII's web-based planning and implementation tool based on the Transformation Toolkit, please email Dr. Sam Redding at sredding@centerii.org.

Purposes

This document is intended for use after the LEA has determined that the Transformation model is the best fit for the school. The purposes of this document are to:

■ outline action items involved in implementing the School Improvement Grant (SIG) Transformation model and

■ provide tools and resources to help districts and schools implement the Transformation model.

Transformation Model Requirements

Under the SIG Transformation model, the LEA replaces the principal with a highly capable principal with either a track record of transformation or clear potential to successfully lead a transformation (although the LEA may retain a recently hired principal where a turnaround, restart, or transformation was instituted in the past two years, and there is tangible evidence that the principal has the skills necessary to initiate dramatic change); implements a rigorous staff evaluation and development system; rewards staff who increase student achievement and/or graduation rates and removes staff who have not improved after ample opportunity; institutes comprehensive instructional reform; increases learning time and applies community-oriented school strategies; and provides greater operational flexibility and support for the school.

How the Toolkit Is Organized

The action items have been organized into the following strands. We intentionally included many strands and action items in order to provide comprehensive resources for as many different needs and users as possible. No reader is expected to need or use every strand or action item (see the section below, "How to Use This Toolkit"). The strands and the primary target audience(s) for each strand are shown in the table below.

Toolkit Strand	Primary Target Audience(s)		
	School	District	State
A: Establishing and Orienting the District Transformation Team		●	●
B: Moving Toward School Autonomy		●	●
C: Selecting a Principal and Recruiting Teachers	●	●	
D: Working with Stakeholders and Building Support for Transformation	●	●	
E: Contracting with External Providers	●	●	●
F: Establishing and Orienting the School Transformation Team	●		
G: Leading Change (Especially for Principals)	●		
H: Evaluating, Rewarding, and Removing Staff	●	●	●
I: Providing Rigorous Staff Development	●	●	
J. Increasing Learning Time	●	●	●
K. Reforming Instruction	●	●	

The action items in this document are not necessarily sequential. Some strands, such as selecting a principal, more easily lend themselves to sequencing than others, e.g., working with stakeholders, where the items will overlap with one another and may be carried out in different order. Exact timelines will vary, depending on LEA and school circumstances. Districts and schools may use the first column of the tables below to enter their own timelines. Note that action items from several strands must be undertaken concurrently.

Except as noted, nearly all the action items apply to districts because so much of the initial implementation work is carried out or guided by the district. Some items, such as examining current state policies, clearly fall under the purview of the state education agency (SEA) as well as the district. Other items, e.g., forming an implementation team and working with stakeholders (Strands A, D, and F), will apply at both the district and school level. The districts will need support from their state education agency (SEA), just as the schools will need support from their districts.

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Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement helps regional comprehensive centers in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students.

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