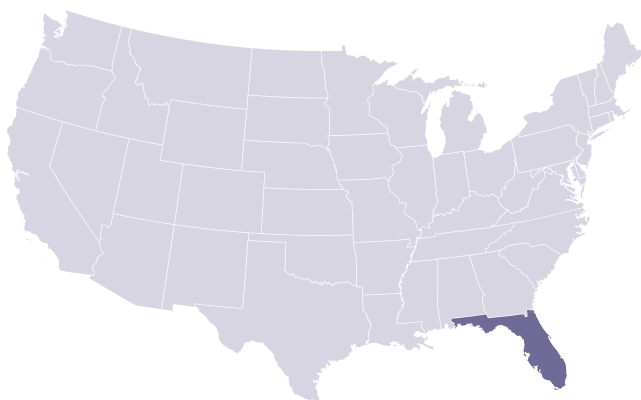




Florida

State Policy Brief
March 2015



Julie Corbett
for the Center on School
Turnaround at WestEd



<http://centeronschoolturnaround.org>

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Florida

State Policy Brief March 2015

A brief prepared by Julie Corbett of Corbett Education Consulting LLC for the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd.

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FLORIDA



Policy Brief on School Turnaround – Florida (March 2015)

I. Overview of Policy

In 2012, Florida passed a state policy that requires the 100 elementary schools (called the Low-100) with the lowest reading scores to add an additional hour of literacy instruction to their regular school day (West & Vickers, 2014). The statute requires that the additional time be used for literacy, and the schools and districts have considerable flexibility in how they implement the policy, including the timing, approach, and professional development of staff. The state recently expanded the program to the 300 lowest-performing (in reading) elementary schools, but this brief focuses on the design and impact of the initial policy.

- ◆ Timing—Schools have flexibility as to when the additional hour is added (before, during, at the end of the day, or in some other combination). Analysis of the first year of implementation at the 100 elementary schools demonstrated the following use of time:
 - 38% added time during the day,
 - 39% added time at the end of the day,
 - 15% varied the timing, and
 - 7% added time at the beginning of the day (West & Vickers, 2014).
- ◆ Approach—Schools also receive autonomy in how the additional hour is structured. The additional time for literacy instruction could be used for whole or small group work, guided instruction, vocabulary work, or individual differentiation.
- ◆ Professional Development—Schools are able to determine their own professional development needs and training. The professional development opportunities could include networking for sharing practices amongst staff, coaching supports from the central office, or school-based professional development designed to create materials to be used during the added time. Analysis of the first year of implementation demonstrated that 81% of schools provided training, and 45% provided additional teacher planning time (West & Vickers, 2014).

The extended hour is usually funded from the state’s Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) line item and the district’s research-based reading instruction allocation,¹ and the hour must include:

- ◆ Research-based instruction;
- ◆ Instruction differentiated based on student reading proficiency;

¹ House, H 5101 er, bill text line 64

- ♦ Integrated phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
- ♦ Incorporated guided practice, error correction, and feedback; and,
- ♦ Integrated social studies, science, and mathematics-text reading; text discussion; and writing in response to reading (West & Vickers, 2014).

Schools are not provided additional funds specifically to implement the program but may allocate all or a portion of their SAI dollars to cover the costs of extended time.² If a district has several schools on the lowest-performing list, their SAI funds may not be sufficient to cover the additional costs. In this case, the district is responsible for covering any shortfall via reallocation of other discretionary funds.

Classroom instruction may only be delivered by teachers and reading specialists who are highly qualified to teach reading. The hiring of additional reading coaches is limited.³ In addition, the extra hour of literacy instruction is added to an already mandatory 90-minute literacy block required daily for all schools in Florida.

II. Development Process

This effort builds off previous state literacy work, including an initiative and SEA office—Just Read, Florida!—launched in 2001 to focus on reading and literacy (Florida Department of Education, <http://www.justreadflorida.com/>). The bill’s author, Republican Sen. David Simmons, based the concept on a reading program piloted in 2007–08 in four schools, which demonstrated strong student achievement results (Gewertz, 2014). The pilot was suggested by a school principal, who told Senator Simmons, “Just give me more seat time, and I can get excellent results” (D. Simmons, personal communication, June 20, 2014).

The Low-100 policy was introduced in January 2012 as part of annual budget appropriations, went through conference committee in February, passed by the house and the senate in March, and the governor signed it into law in April. The budget received almost unanimous passage in the senate but was slightly more controversial in the house.⁴

Despite being a statewide law, implementation required a change in the working conditions of teachers. In effect, local union negotiations were necessary and completed district-by-district. Most districts and unions agreed upon additional pay for the extra hour of time and allowed teachers an “opt out” clause and the right to transfer to a different school if they did not want to comply with the revised conditions. Teachers and their unions showed some initial pushback to the extended day, but after a year of implementation, many formerly critical teachers started to see results and that the program was effective (Gewertz, 2014; D. Simmons, personal communication, June 20, 2014).

² The SAI budget was increased overall, and all schools received additional SAI funding for the 2013-14 school year (D. Simmons, personal communication, June 20, 2014).

³ House Bill 501, bill text lines 707-9

⁴ House Bill 501

III. Impact

After one year of implementation, “three-quarters of the schools saw improved reading scores on the state’s standardized test, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, or FCAT. Seventy of the 100 schools earned their way off the lowest-performing list altogether” (Gerwertz, 2014, para. 2).

Florida’s government accountability office analyzed the first year of implementation to assess if students’ reading performance improved at the schools that implemented the additional hour. The study included an analysis of student scores as well as interviews with principals and found that 69% of schools moved off the low-performing list, while the remaining 31% of schools stayed on the low performance in literacy list (West & Vickers, 2014). In addition, 76% of schools demonstrated an increase of students reading at grade level (West & Vickers, 2014).

When compared to similar schools that did not implement the additional hour program, results were mixed. To support the program, approximately 20% of Low-100 schools demonstrated statistically significant results of students performing better than the control group. But, approximately 13% of the Low-100 schools demonstrated student performance lower than non-participating schools (West & Vickers, 2014).

In regard to the implementation flexibilities schools have, the analysis showed that the most successful schools added time at the end of the day (West & Vickers, 2014). Most schools provided some training, and about half gave teachers additional planning time. Neither strategy (additional training or planning time) demonstrated a positive impact on student outcomes (Gewertz, 2014; West & Vickers, 2014). The study did not include an analysis of the various instructional strategies that schools might have used during implementation.

The analysis also included surveys of principals, and 66% of principals believe the extra hour is effective (16% ineffective and 18% undecided). Regarding the goal of schools improving their A-F accountability grades, only 22 of the 100 schools improved their overall grades, but 70 of the schools improved their FCAT reading scores enough to move off the Low-100 list.⁵ In addition, after one year of implementation, 30 schools that moved off the low-performing list and were no longer required to include the extra hour are choosing to continue the additional hour (West & Vickers, 2014).

IV. Moving Implementation Forward

Several issues arose during the first year of implementation, including the timing of the release of the state lists and the need to plan for annual budgets and programs. Laurie Lee, the deputy director of the state education department’s Just Read, Florida! office, reflects that “schools have to scramble to set up reading interventions, since they don’t learn until July that they are on the list” (Gewertz, 2014, para. 11). In addition, since the list changes each year, it is difficult for schools and districts to plan programming and staffing for more than one year at a time (Gewertz, 2014).

While the initial legislative study on Florida’s implementation provided some analysis of the effectiveness of the program, further and more detailed analysis should be completed to assess the use of various instructional and training strategies. In addition, it would be useful to examine the quality of instruction of teachers and the outcomes their students demonstrated (i.e., what is the impact of additional time on students when receiving varying qualities of instruction? Is it the additional time or the improved instructional practice that impacts student learning?).

⁵ Reading proficiency and growth are two of several indicators used to determine the A-F accountability grades (Gewertz, 2014).

Palm Beach County saw particularly strong results with 15 of 16 schools moving off the Low-100 list within one year (Stainburn, 2014). Staff from the Florida Department of Education visited the district, which demonstrated particularly strong and statistically significant results, to find out more about their implementation choices, what was effective, what wasn't effective, and to learn lessons that might be applicable for statewide scaling (S. Foerster, personal communication, June 20, 2014).

Recently, Florida expanded the program from the 100 lowest-performing elementary schools (in reading) to the lowest 300. This expansion was supported by the results seen during the first year of implementation. The expansion to 300 schools will be closely monitored, and future accountability studies will likely occur (D. Simmons, personal communication, June 20, 2014). Senator Simmons states, "I need to be honest with myself and my colleagues, we're [spending millions of dollars] and we need to make sure it works."

V. Lessons Learned From Florida

- ◆ Ensure quality instruction. The bill includes the provision that teachers must be highly qualified to teach reading, but teachers should be assessed to determine if high qualifications correlate with highly effective instruction.
- ◆ Caution the amount of leeway provided to schools and districts. Flexibility allows a program and/or strategy to reflect student, teacher, and community needs, but too much flexibility may impact the fidelity of implementation. Some flexibility should be permitted to reflect unique approaches designed to meet individual school needs, yet strategies that demonstrate statistically significant results should be encouraged (i.e., schools and districts have the ability to determine when to add the additional hour, but preliminary research⁶ demonstrates that adding time to the end of the day was most effective).
- ◆ Be creative with implementation. The statute specifies that interdisciplinary learning is a goal, but there is limited information on the actual implementation and instruction. Additional years of implementation may result in stronger and more integrated strategies that link reading and literacy instruction to other learning.
- ◆ Hold districts accountable. Each district must submit a comprehensive reading plan to the state about how funds will be spent and what implementation strategies will be used. The plan should be designed with input from school and district personnel, teachers, and principals. The state education agency is tasked with monitoring and tracking implementation of each district plan and may include site visits to assess results and expenditures.⁷ That said, it is unclear if there are any clear consequences for not implementing the extended time if on the lowest-performing list (S. Foerster, personal communication, June 9, 2014; D. Simmons, personal communication, June 20, 2014).
- ◆ Regularly monitor for progress. The school, district, and state should monitor progress regularly to assess changes in student achievement and changes in adult practice. Detailed analysis should also be completed from the state level to assess if the extended time caused the improvements in student achievement or if growth was due to schools and districts assessing the efficacy of their programs and teachers.

⁶ Additional research of the year one results would be needed to determine statistically sound findings.

⁷ House Bill 501, bill text lines 872-5

- ◆ Review the timeline. When developing a policy, ensure that the timeline of various required steps make sense. For example, test results (which determine the list) are announced in late June or early July, and the policy states that the additional hour must be implemented the following school year. As a result, school principals and districts have 6-8 weeks to plan for implementation. A longer planning time frame would allow schools and districts to be more strategic and thoughtful about their approach, training required, staffing, and material acquisition (S. Foerster, personal communication, June 20, 2014).
- ◆ Weigh the cost. Implementing extended time is an extremely expensive strategy and may be cost prohibitive for many states and districts. In addition, extended time itself is not a silver bullet. Instead, it is more important to focus on what happens during that time. Additional time in a subpar program or with subpar instruction will only produce subpar results.

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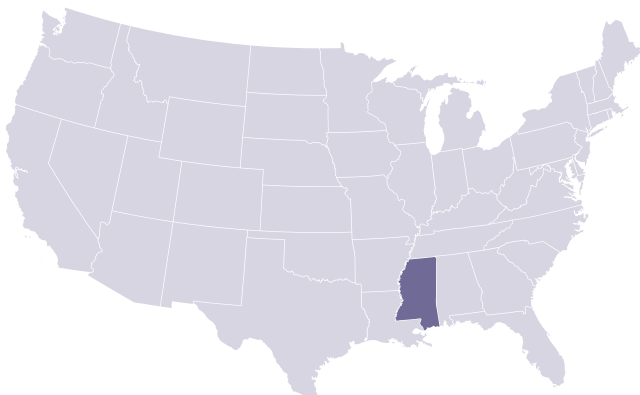
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Mississippi

State Policy Brief
December 2014



Julie Corbett
for the Center on School
Turnaround at WestEd



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Mississippi

State Policy Brief December 2014

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MISSISSIPPI

Policy Brief on School Turnaround – Mississippi (December 2014)

Mississippi: Children First Act of 2009

I. Overview of Policy

In 2009, the Mississippi state legislature, with broad bipartisan support,¹ enacted the Children First Act of 2009 (Senate Bill 2628). In the years leading up to its passage, the number of Mississippi school districts that were not meeting the education needs of their students had continued to grow, and the legislation reflected a broad-based acknowledgement that drastic changes were needed. Under the new act, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) was given unprecedented authority to develop policies, practices, and structures for dealing with chronically low-performing local education agencies (LEAs). Additional provisions were later added to strengthen the bill (see section II).

Key provisions of the Children First Act of 2009 are as follows:

- ◆ The governor may declare an LEA to be in a “state of emergency” due to significant low performance (as determined by MDE), a declaration that opens the door to the following actions:²
 - The State Board of Education may create a conservatorship for a failing district, appointing a conservator who essentially acts as superintendent, assuming all control of the district’s central office and schools, and who reports to MDE.³
 - The LEA’s current school board members and superintendent may be removed, with those removed being ineligible to ever act again for the district in that same capacity.⁴
- ◆ A single statewide Recovery School District, managed by MDE, may be created to oversee, support, and manage all districts under conservatorship.⁵
- ◆ The Education Employment Procedures Law, which governs educators’ tenure, seniority rights, dismissal procedures, and employment rights,⁶ no longer applies to any employee of a district under conservatorship, a change that provides greater flexibility for staffing the district and its schools.⁷

1 Senate–51 yeas, 0 nays, 1 not voting/absent; House–116 yeas, 4 nays, 2 not voting/absent (Senate Bill 2628).

2 The five entry points for a “state of emergency” declaration include: (1) if the LEA jeopardizes the safety or educational interests of its students; (2) if the LEA has been labeled a “failing” district for two consecutive years by MDE; (3) if 50% or more of its schools are labeled “at-risk” in any one year by MDE; (4) if the LEA lacks adequate financial resources; or (5) evidence demonstrates a continued pattern of poor academic performance (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012b).

3 Mississippi Code of 1972, 37-17-6(15.a)

4 Mississippi Code of 1972, 37-17-13(3)

5 Mississippi Code of 1972, 37-117-6(12.g)

6 The Education Employment Procedures Law governs tenure, seniority rights, dismissal procedures, and employment rights (House Bill 527).

7 Mississippi Code of 1972, 37-9-103(2)

II. Development Process

The 2009 bill was based on recommendations from a legislative task force created to develop solutions for the growing number of chronically underperforming LEAs. The bill, presented in January 2009, went through very few rounds of amendments or committee reviews prior to its passage. It was signed by the governor, Haley Barbour, in April 2009.

Subsequent to the bill's passage, MDE drafted and proposed—and the state board of education then approved—several procedural additions and policy changes to further define implementation practices related to the bill and to strengthen the legislation's intent. The changes include the following:

1. Before being put under conservatorship, a low-performing district has its state accreditation withdrawn, which results in (1) significant limitations on its interscholastic activities (including athletics),⁸ (2) the need for the district to create a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), (3) the appointment by MDE of a CAP advisor, and (4) the establishment of academic growth targets to be attained within one year. If growth targets are not reached, the district is put under conservatorship.
2. Once a conservator is appointed by MDE rather than by the state board of education, the school board and superintendent are automatically and immediately removed.
3. An LEA that was previously under conservatorship but made enough progress to have been returned to local control may be abolished in its entirety if its subsequent performance leads to a second “state of emergency” recommendation by MDE.⁹ This particular provision was designed to increase the pressure on districts to make real and substantial improvements in district structures and to sustain long-term student achievement.

III. Impact

Since the bill's passage in 2009, nine chronically low-performing districts have been declared to be in a “state of emergency” with conservators appointed by MDE, and the RSD was launched to manage the districts. The nine districts collectively enroll approximately 17,000 students (3.4% of all Mississippi students). The conservators for these districts have made substantial changes in LEA management and administration and, as a result, some LEAs show promising student achievement results (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013a). At the same time, however, the number of LEAs approaching conservatorship has continued growing. With new LEAs entering conservatorship status and few yet exiting, it is unclear how much capacity the RSD has to manage and monitor changes in a growing number of LEAs, especially since the RSD was designed to provide intensive and differentiated supports to the neediest LEAs.

Under the original Children First Act of 2009, the school boards for LEAs under conservatorship could be, but were not necessarily, removed. Recognizing the pivotal role that local boards can play in perpetuating chronically underperforming schools, the MDE subsequently requested legislative changes to require the immediate removal of board members and the superintendent in these districts. The state legislature made the change, and automatic removal began in 2010. All districts under conservatorship have had their boards and superintendents removed.

⁸ Games or events are decreased by 50% or more of the regular season and may only take place within the district (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2014. Mississippi Department of Education. Retrieved from [http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/accreditation-library/final2014-mpsas-8-11-14-\(3\).pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/accreditation-library/final2014-mpsas-8-11-14-(3).pdf?sfvrsn=2)).

⁹ Mississippi Code of 1972, 37-17-6(2.f)

Two districts in the process of being taken over by the MDE filed lawsuits to hold off the conservatorship and resulting entry into the RSD. In one case, the state Supreme Court ruled that it, the court, lacked authority to strike down the governor's executive order declaring the district to be in a "state of emergency" (Davis, 2013). The court refused to hear the second case (Amy, 2013).

Student achievement data for the seven districts and 31 schools that have been part of the RSD for several years and for which data were available show slight improvements. Just over half of the schools demonstrated improvements in student achievement in 2013, as measured by Mississippi's Quality of Distribution Index (QDI), which represents the overall measure of student performance on statewide assessments (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013b). In one year (2012-13), 17 of the 31 schools demonstrated improvements in student achievement, while 14 of the 31 schools demonstrated decreases in student achievement.¹⁰ While individual school results were mixed, five of seven districts demonstrated increased QDI scores, indicating that student achievement is improving in the majority of districts under conservatorship (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013b).

IV. Lessons Learned From Mississippi

The following lessons emerge from the Mississippi experience:

- ◆ Develop an ultimate action or consequence for poor school or district performance that is strong enough to focus attention on the issue and, thus, force leaders to acknowledge the problem and make changes.
- ◆ Be prepared to face legal challenges (Amy, 2013; Davis, 2013).
- ◆ Recognize that real and substantial change is unlikely in local districts that retain existing board members and staff unless there is significant buy-in on their part for reform and, with that buy-in, significant capacity-building.
- ◆ Plan next steps for districts that reform and improve and for those that do not demonstrate any improvement:
 - Define how a state education agency knows when an LEA is ready to exit conservatorship and have its autonomy restored;
 - Develop a plan for LEAs that do not demonstrate growth; and
 - Develop an ultimate action or consequence, such as dissolving a district, for districts that cannot or refuse to make the changes that will result in different adult practices and improved student achievement.

¹⁰ NCLB Accountability reports, 2011-12 and 2012-13. Retrieved from <http://reports.mde.k12.ms.us/data/>

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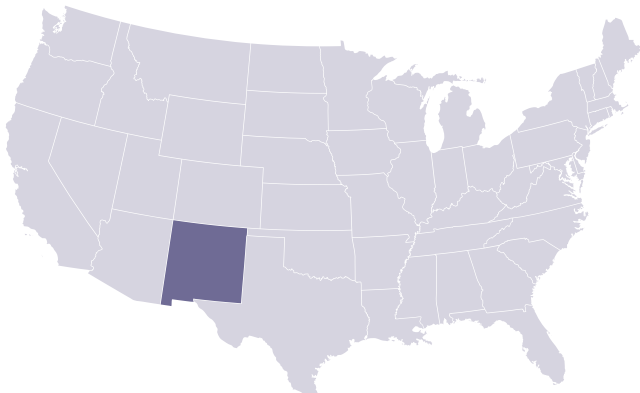
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New Mexico

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January 2015



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New Mexico

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NEW MEXICO

Policy Brief on School Turnaround – New Mexico (January 2015)

New Mexico: Principals Pursuing Excellence

I. Overview of Program

The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) launched a program in 2013, called Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE), designed to develop a cadre of strong turnaround principals. The SEA realized that a shortage of turnaround principals would dampen the state’s efforts to turn around their lowest performing schools and developed the program to target that need. After one full year of implementation, the SEA’s Priority Schools Bureau (PSB; New Mexico Public Education Department, <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/PrioritySchoolsCPMP.html>) is continuing the program with a second cohort.

The PPE program is designed to “leverage the expertise of local leaders to support and empower Mentee principals, as they work urgently to dramatically improve student achievement in their schools” (NMPED, 2014a, slide 5). Mentee principals must be currently employed at schools graded C, D, or F by the state and are supported through a multilayered professional development program over the course of one year.

New Mexico has participated in the University of Virginia’s School Turnaround Specialist Program (UVA-STSP) since 2010, and many of the aspects of this program were incorporated into the PPE program. One of the core features of UVA-STSP is building a set of professional skill competencies, divided into four clusters, which are indicators of a high capacity turnaround leader. The four clusters include: driving for results, influencing for results, problem solving, and showing confidence to lead (Mancuso & Petterson, n.d.). Based on New Mexico’s experience with UVA-STSP, these competencies became the foundation of the PPE program.

II. Program Description

The PPE theory of action ties the capacity of principals to student achievement through an if/then logic model:

- ◆ If we strengthen the competencies of leaders to transform districts, then they will have the capacity to take bold and purposeful action.
- ◆ If leaders take bold and purposeful action, then they will establish the conditions for effective teaching and learning.
- ◆ If the conditions for effective teaching and learning are established, then teachers will have the opportunity to improve instructional practice.
- ◆ If teachers improve instructional practice, then student learning will increase (NMPED, 2014a).

The Mentee principals enter the program after completion of an application and participation in a Behavior Event Interview (BEI). The interview process is designed to evaluate an applicant’s turnaround competencies and determine their capacity to turn around a school by using past examples to predict future behaviors, thoughts, actions, and beliefs (NMPED, 2014). The Mentors and Turnaround Leaders who

support the Mentee principals undergo the same process of completing an application and a BEI.¹ Once selected, the Mentees, Mentors, and Turnaround Leaders have a number of specific roles and responsibilities as part of the program. In addition, NMPED and the district also play important roles. The roles and responsibilities of the various players are listed below.

NMPED

- ◆ Establish project direction and structure
- ◆ Communicate expectation of dramatic and sustained change to all participants
- ◆ Facilitate fall, winter, and spring trainings for all participants based on turnaround research
- ◆ Document all work associated with the project for evaluation purposes (NMPED, 2014a, Slide 14)
- ◆ Recruit, screen, and select Mentee candidates
- ◆ Recruit, screen, select, and train Mentors and Turnaround Leaders
- ◆ Collaborate with Mentors, Turnaround Leaders, and district staff to align existing support, provide additional support, plan to address the needs of each district, and discuss trends across the state (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

Turnaround Leader

- ◆ Serves as the link between NMPED, district, Mentor, and Mentee
- ◆ Facilitates communication and differentiates supports to Mentors and Mentees to develop turnaround competencies
- ◆ Focus all roles on supporting the Mentee in creation and implementation of 90-day action plans (NMPED, 2014a, Slide 15)
- ◆ Participates in a day of training and collaboration before each two-day statewide mentee session
- ◆ Serves 2-4 Mentors

Mentor

- ◆ Collaborates with Turnaround Leader to support Mentee in creation and implementation of 90-day Plans
- ◆ Facilitates communication with NMPED, district, and Turnaround Leader
- ◆ Differentiates distance and onsite support to Mentees to develop turnaround competencies (NMPED, 2014a, Slide 16)
- ◆ Participate in a day of training and collaboration before each two-day statewide mentee session
- ◆ Serves 2-4 Mentees

¹ Additional details on the hiring process and role-specific qualifications are available in the Overview of the program and in the role-specific applications available at: <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/PrioritySchoolsCPMP.html>.

District

- ◆ Partner with the Mentee principal to establish and deploy a comprehensive school turnaround plan
- ◆ Partner with Mentee on “critical autonomies” (such as staffing decisions, scheduling, budgeting, and other operational issues)
- ◆ Provide rigorous, aligned formative assessments and efficient data distribution
- ◆ Proactively engage the community in the turnaround effort
- ◆ Monitor turnaround efforts to ensure accountability with support of PPE Turnaround Leader and Mentor (NMPED, 2014a, Slide 17)
- ◆ Participate in professional development workshops and Professional Learning Community
- ◆ Participate in an additional day of professional development for superintendents

Mentee

- ◆ Assess school needs, design and implement effective turnaround strategies with multilayered support from Turnaround Leader, Mentor, district, and NMPED
- ◆ Receive ongoing coaching and mentoring through monthly onsite visits and frequent check-ins
- ◆ Participate in professional development workshops (several two-day sessions)² and Professional Learning Community
- ◆ Cultivate the competencies and skills of transformational leaders (NMPED, 2014a, Slide 18)
- ◆ Keep artifacts to demonstrate growth
- ◆ Must work at a school with a state accountability grade of C, D, or F³

The application also includes a letter of commitment from the district Superintendent to clarify the role of the district. NMPED requires the district to commit to supporting the principals throughout the program and strongly encourages the district to provide the principal additional autonomies or additional supports. For example, some Cohort I districts adjusted their central office structures to better support the principals, some ensured that school and district teams had sufficient time to meet, while others encouraged data-driven instruction from the top down. Many Cohort I districts initiated changes in their PPE-affiliated schools but then expanded those changes to the rest of the district as well (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

The coaching sessions between the Mentor and Mentee are the primary means of support to the Mentee. Coaching sessions occur, at least monthly, onsite and remotely and focus on building each individual Mentee’s competencies while also supporting the Mentee in developing the turnaround plan for the school (NMPED, 2014b; WestEd & NMPED, 2014). “The program relies in large part on the intrinsic knowledge of

² Cohort I featured three 2-day sessions and Cohort II will feature four 2-day sessions (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

³ Schools with grades D or F were eligible for Cohort I. Schools with grades C, D, or F were eligible for Cohort II (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

the turnaround leaders and mentors, supported by a curriculum based primarily on Bambrick-Santoyo's 2012 book *Leverage Leadership*, which focuses on seven core areas of school leadership" (WestEd & NMPED, 2014, p. 4). Onsite coaching sessions could include action planning, analysis of data, and classroom walkthroughs (WestEd & NMPED, 2014). Turnaround Leaders and Mentors report to PSB three times a year. The reports are used to monitor and document progress of Mentees as they implement actions and develop competencies over the course of the program (WestEd & NMPED, 2014).

In addition, "turnaround leaders and mentors [are] charged with teaching, coaching, and helping participating principals build confidence to affect change in these areas, and the 90-day action plans [track] participants' actions and progress in each of these areas throughout the [school year]. Developed after an in-depth examination of local needs, the 90-day action plan serves as the mechanism for improving the systems in place, and it is the focus of the professional dialogue between the turnaround leader, mentor, and mentee." (WestEd & NMPED, 2014, p. 5)

NMPED sponsors several two-day training sessions that provide additional professional development opportunities to the Mentees, Mentors, and Turnaround Leaders.⁴ The content for these sessions was based on the work of Public Impact (2008) and Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) and was differentiated to address the needs of the participants (WestEd & NMPED, 2014).

It is important to note that schools and districts participating in the PPE program do not receive any additional funds to support the turnaround work. The SEA covers travel costs of Mentees, but the individuals, schools, or districts do not receive additional grant funds. The Mentors and Turnaround Leaders receive an honorarium for their work supporting the districts.

III. Impact

The first PPE cohort (2013–2014) included 34 Mentee principals in 11 districts across New Mexico. The Mentees were supported by 13 Mentors and 5 Turnaround Leaders (WestEd & NMPED, 2014).

In partnership with the West Comprehensive Center,⁵ NMPED closely monitored and analyzed the impact of the PPE program. Analysis of the end-of-year reports from the Mentors and Turnaround Leaders assessed the extent to which the principals took actions and changed conditions to improve his or her school. This analysis was supplemented with the results of focus group discussions with PPE Mentee principals. Analysis of online surveys completed by teachers in each of the participating schools also assessed the changes in the schools (WestEd & NMPED, 2014).

Data analysis from the first cohort found that data-based decision making, informed instruction, and use of distributed leadership improved in the PPE schools (comparing one year of PPE participation to previous years). Teacher surveys indicated that aligning professional development and changing school culture remain areas of concern. The results of the teacher survey indicated that "participating PPE principals seemed to be taking action in their schools in 2013/14 to make changes, but they also imply that school leaders likely need to work to better involve teachers in these reforms moving forward" (WestEd & NMPED, 2014, p. 10).

⁴ There are four 2-day sessions for Cohort II (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

⁵ Managed by West Ed

Statewide report card grades are also used to demonstrate the impact of the program and show strong growth. After one year of participation:

- ◆ 53% of PPE schools experienced one or more grades of growth,
- ◆ 18% of PPE schools experienced two or more grades growth, and
- ◆ 3% (1 PPE school) experienced three grades of growth from an F to a B (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

New Mexico has several programs and intervention strategies for its lowest performing schools and districts, including the PPE program, participation in the UVA-STSP program, and the federally funded School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. As a result, NMPED has the ability to monitor the effectiveness of the various interventions, determine which strategies are most effective, and modify programs to reflect the monitoring data.

The second PPE cohort launched in September 2014 and includes 38 Mentee principals. Recruitment for this cohort targeted northern New Mexico, as there was less participation from that region in Cohort I. NMPED worked with districts to recruit multiple Mentee principals from the same district to increase the opportunity for shared learning. In addition, several superintendents who participated in the first cohort wanted to participate again but with a new group of principals (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

IV. Moving Implementation Forward

Based on the feedback and results from the first cohort, NMPED is scaling up for a second PPE cohort. While the first cohort consisted of 12 principals, almost 40 principals will participate in Cohort II.

NMPED also determined that the group professional development sessions would be beneficial for schools and districts receiving SIG funds. All year 4 Cohort II SIG-recipients (as part of their phase out process and continuous support) and all incoming year 1 Cohort III SIG-recipients for the 2014-15 school year will be required to attend the four two-day training sessions.

The Program Review developed by the West Comprehensive Center suggests several changes to the program for year 2, and NMPED made appropriate adjustments to respond to the recommendations, including:

- ◆ Additional (and earlier) training on improving student and staff culture at the school,
- ◆ Increased engagement with the superintendents and teacher leaders,
- ◆ Clarification of expectations and requirements for program participants (including roles, templates for reporting mechanisms, frequency of meetings, calendar/timeline),
- ◆ Providing additional training for Mentors and Turnaround Leaders before Mentees are selected, and
- ◆ Development of tools to bring consistency across the program (H. Peria, personal communication, September 15, 2014; WestEd & NMPED, 2014).

V. Lessons Learned From New Mexico

- ◆ Gather baseline data and closely monitor various interventions to make mid-course changes, compare strategies, and modify as needed.
- ◆ Recruit and screen candidates and consultants carefully to ensure high capacity from the start, even if that means starting with smaller cohorts than initially planned.
- ◆ Think carefully about sustained support—PPE is a one-year program, but principals may need additional support beyond that year to continue to build and to refine their skills.
- ◆ Ensure rigor from the onset—participants (Mentees, Mentors, and Turnaround Leaders) want high expectations. They want and need the training and the supports to achieve those expectations but thrive off increased accountability.
- ◆ Data-based decision-making cannot be separated from climate and culture. While the skills are different, the content should be taught simultaneously to link using data to changing climate and culture.
- ◆ Monitor mentee/mentor relationships carefully and make adjustments if personalities or work styles are not conducive to positive working relationships.
- ◆ Encouraging superintendent support from the onset is useful, but the real work comes down to ensuring that superintendents and district leaders actually implement changes at the district level.
- ◆ Additional grant funds do not necessarily equate to successful turnaround—New Mexico’s intervention experiences may indicate that SIG funding alone is not sufficient to turn around school. A strong leader that has support from the district and external coaching to build his or her own competencies to lead and manage a turnaround effort might be more effective than simply allocating millions of dollars to a school or district.

V. References

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