



Policy  
Perspective:  
School Turnaround  
in England



Utilizing the Private Sector

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Turnaround at WestEd

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# Policy Perspective: School Turnaround in England

## Utilizing the Private Sector

### **Julie Corbett for The Center on School Turnaround**

Corbett spent twelve days in London in October 2013 and a year learning about aspects of the English education system as part of the Global Education Policy Fellowship Program (GEPFP). The program is affiliated with the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL). Corbett was a fellow of the Boston-based EPFP site in 2007-08 and was a senior fellow with the global program (2013-14). In addition, some of the research used in this report was conducted for work commissioned by the Illinois Center for School Improvement, managed by American Institutes for Research, and is used with permission.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Similar to the United States, the English<sup>1</sup> education system struggles with a number of chronically low-performing schools. Such schools are often located within underperforming local education authorities (LEAs). Turnarounds do occur, often when a dynamic school leader comes into the building and makes some radical changes to improve culture and climate that result in some minor improvements in student achievement, but that growth is often short lived; the same schools and LEAs generally continue to occupy the lowest performing lists. In contrast to the United States, the private sector is substantially involved in the English education system, particularly in regard to efforts to improve its underperforming schools and districts.

It may be useful for U.S. educators, administrators, and policymakers to examine how England's public-private partnerships approach the problem of chronically underperforming schools, as the English education system faces many of the same struggles as the United States. Similarities

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<sup>1</sup> This document examines strategies implemented in the English education system. While some aspects are similar to the other education systems within the UK, each system is governed separately by its own policies.

include the need to increase instructional rigor in the classroom (in response to higher standards); the “teaching to the test” debate; an insufficient pool of highly effective teachers; a shortage of specialist teachers; limited (and decreasing) funding streams; changing community demographics; the impact of poverty; an undereducated or miseducated workforce of graduates unprepared to take available jobs; and an ongoing debate about what constitutes college *and* career readiness.

This paper begins with a discussion of the private sector's involvement in education in England and a brief overview of the English education system. It then looks at three different models of private sector involvement in turning around low-performing schools and districts: (1) school-based management (as opposed to district-based management), in which schools are free to contract for education services with the vendor(s) of their choice; (2) converting low-performing schools into *academies*, which are state-funded schools that are sponsored by a high-performing education organization; and (3) temporarily outsourcing the management of LEAs to private vendors. The paper concludes with lessons

learned from England’s private sector school turnaround efforts, which could potentially inform school turnaround discussions and strategies in the United States.

The sources of information and research for this paper include several interviews and small group presentations by leaders in the English education field, along with a handful of books and articles, most notably a book authored by Andrew Adonis which chronicles the history and evolution of the academies movement.<sup>2</sup> This paper does not explore all possible implications for implementing a similar private-sector approach in the United States, nor does it include detailed history of the English education system. This paper is designed to offer useful insights into various private-sector models for school and district improvement—insights that may provoke productive discussions among educators and policymakers in the United States about additional alternative strategies for turning around chronically low-performing schools and districts.

## Private Sector Involvement in Education

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In the United States, there is ongoing, and sometimes controversial, debate about using a market-based approach to public education. Essentially, a market-based approach to education features freedom of choice for consumers (students and parents) and increased competition among vendors (schools, school districts, and private service providers). In theory, schools with low enrollment or vendors with few contracts would go out of business; schools with high enrollment or vendors with abundant contracts would have the ability to expand to meet the demand. Theoretically—following the logic of a market-based argument—the competition between

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**2 Adonis was the head of the Prime Minister’s policy unit from 2001-05, Junior Minister in the Department for Education from 2005-08, and one of the founders of the academies program.**

vendors could help drive up the quality of the education services provided, as well as drive down the price of those services.

The charter school movement in the United States is a type of market-based approach, as students and their parents may choose to leave a traditional public school and enroll in the independently managed (often by a not-for-profit private vendor) charter school. As a result, if students choose to attend charter schools, the LEAs and traditional public schools lose their customers (i.e., students) and the government dollars that they receive to support those students. This competition for consumers theoretically results in improved quality of both the charter schools and the traditional public schools as both strive to keep their customers (Guggenheim & Kimball, 2010; Hoxby, 2000; Peterson & Hassel, 1998).

In the United States, some states already utilize private vendors to support school turnaround, as many states encourage or even require schools and LEAs to contract with external vendors to support whole school turnaround efforts and the implementation of two of four federally required school improvement models. Many of these Lead Turnaround Partners (LTPs) emerged from the charter school and education support service sectors. This is a growing field for vendors and State Education Agencies (SEAs), and promising practices are still emerging (Corbett, 2011).

Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman was one of the strongest 20th century proponents of free markets and allowing consumer choice to drive markets. He stated, “A major source of objection to a free economy is precisely that it... gives people what they want instead of what a particular group thinks they ought to want. Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself” (2009, p. 15). Such a statement aligns to the turnaround movement as it reflects the lack of choice in traditional public education systems and the common arguments against using free-market ideologies within education.



Following the logic of a free-market approach, if a high-quality alternative is present, it forces all other competitors to improve their quality to remain in the market. The three English school and district turnaround models profiled in this paper all share this sort of market-based approach—through the use of private vendors and partners to improve public education—and, so far, these models appear to produce results.

## England’s Educational and Political Context

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To help put this paper in context, this section offers some brief descriptions of England’s educational and political landscape.

The English education system educates 8.3 million students in 24,347 schools; 2.4 million of those students (approximately 30% of all students) attend academies, including converter and sponsored academies (which are both described in more detail in the Academies Model section of this paper), free schools, university technical colleges, and studio schools. Of the 2.4 million students enrolled at academies, 30% of those students attend sponsored academies, which have a higher percentage of students eligible for free school meals, as compared to schools with other governance structures (Department for Education, 2014). State-funded primary schools have an average class size of 27.4 students, 16.3% of students are eligible for free school meals, and 14.3% of students speak a first language other than English. The United Kingdom spends \$9,980 per full-time enrolled student. In contrast, the United States spends \$11,826 per full-time student (Institute for Education Sciences, 2013).

In England, elections and the resulting changes in government and political ideologies significantly impact education. Although greatly simplified, one might say the political parties and their approaches to turning around schools include the following: the Labour Party initiated the turnaround movement and the need to address chronically

low-performing schools; the Conservative Party brought the turnaround movement to scale across the country; and the current coalition government advocates freedom from regulations (K. Hackwell, personal communication, October 25, 2013).

There is a growing consensus that White English children are the most at-risk for academic failure. Past federal administrations focused on the integration of immigrants into English society, but few efforts targeted the needs of or supported low-income White English children. As a result of the intensified support for immigrants, White English children remain in intergenerational poverty (M. Taylor, personal communication, October 21, 2013).

Similar to movements in the United States, alternative teacher training and certification programs, similar to Teach for America, are widely used and generally supported (Baars, et al. 2014). In addition, there is a growing trend in England to shift teacher education from universities to “teaching schools” that integrate additional pedagogical practice into the curriculum (Adonis, 2012; M. Taylor, personal communication, October 21, 2013).

Unlike the United States, a large philanthropic community does not exist in England to soften the effects of government cuts in public spending and to inject innovation into the education system (K. Hackwell, personal communication, October 25, 2013). Innovation in England comes from the private school system or as part of government practices and policies.

## Types of Schools

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The current English education system includes a variety of school governance models. The governance models most applicable to this brief are the following:

- Academies: Government-funded<sup>3</sup> individual schools that have freedom from the LEA.

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**3 All government-funded schools are referred to as “main-tained schools.”**

They are able to set their own pay schedules, staff conditions, curriculum, and budgets, and they have the ability to change lengths of terms and school days. Approximately 50% of federally funded schools are now academies (I. Hartwright, group communication, October 21, 2013). Academies are monitored directly by the Department for Education (DfE). Academies may be individual buildings or part of a chain (similar to a charter management organization in the United States) in which the schools are autonomous by design, but the chain provides a variety of supports and services. There are two types of academies—sponsored and converter—discussed later in this brief.

- Free schools: Government-funded schools set up by parents, teachers, or community members when there is a perceived community need for additional schools. Free schools are completely new schools, as opposed to a conversion. They are monitored by the DfE.
- Independent schools: Privately run, fee-based independent schools. Often referred to as prep or public schools. These schools receive no federal funding.

## School Accountability System

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There are several mechanisms for school accountability in England, including: strong government bodies involved with the education system; independent inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services, and Skills (OFSTED);<sup>4</sup> the publication of school performance data; and the ability to choose a school (Adonis, 2012). The OFSTED inspection is the most

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**4 OFSTED is an independent accountability system and is not part of the Department for Education. This independence is designed to encourage impartial inspections. See <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>**

intensive mechanism for school accountability, and the determinations are based on the quality of education a school provides, as well as their capacity to improve performance. The inspections occur with little warning (usually just a few days), and OFSTED's sequence of events for inspections include the following:

- Pre-work: data collection and analysis; review of past OFSTED inspection reports; review of a school-submitted self-report; and development of a hypothesis, summary, and school inspection plan.
- Site Visit (two days): most time is spent observing lessons and student transitions between classes, conducting student interviews, and release and analysis of an online survey for parents.
- Preliminary Report: schools have 24 hours to respond to factual inaccuracies in the preliminary inspection report developed by OFSTED.
- Report: the OFSTED inspection report is published within 10 days of the inspection. The school must make the report publically available; it is posted online within 15 days.

The inspections are carried out across England by approximately 300 of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) with instructions to "report without fear or favor" (I. Hartwright, group communication, October 21, 2013). OFSTED completes over 30,000 inspections a year. The department subcontracts with three external providers to give additional support during the actual inspections; however, all reports must be reviewed and signed by one of the OFSTED-employed HMIs. With recent budget cuts, OFSTED is now trying to prioritize inspections to concentrate on schools previously identified as *inadequate* or *requires improvement*. In addition, schools receiving low status determinations receive additional supports from OFSTED, including additional monitoring visits which are designed to support the school in making the changes recommended in the OFSTED inspection report.

The DfE sets the standards for education, but OFSTED sets the benchmark performance measurements and indicators for schools to meet, which include student academic performance measures, as well as measures of administrator and teacher practice (such as the quality of instruction in classrooms and the climate and culture of the school during class transitions). In addition to analyzing the current academic performance of students, OFSTED examines the school improvement services of the LEAs by assessing their capacity to provide schools with high-quality supports, services, and governance. In essence, “a low-performing school could be labeled ‘good’ if the leadership and management team have a vision, plan, and the ambition to create sustainable improvements” (I. Hartwright, group communication, October 21, 2013). In addition, higher-performing schools could be given a designation of *Requires Improvement* if significant issues with the governance and structure of the school are noted.

There are four levels of performance that OFSTED uses to classify all schools: *Outstanding*; *Good*; *Requires Improvement*; and *Inadequate*. The *Inadequate* classification includes two additional sub-levels: *Notice to Improve*, which is a designation given if the inspectors believe that the existing staff have the capacity to improve

on their own, and *Special Measures*, which is a designation given to schools if one or more areas of school quality are deemed inadequate and the school does not have the capacity to improve without significant external support. If the school is given a designation of *Inadequate with Special Measures*, the inspectors provide the school with a set of recommendations, increase monitoring of the school, and often recommend the school seek a sponsor to help manage its improvement. Under the Academies Act of 2010, DfE has the authority to order a school in *special measures* to implement actions, which could include changing the governance structure (see the later section on the academies model).

OFSTED recently began examining the role of LEAs and, while it does not evaluate the quality of the LEA, it does make a broad judgment about the LEA’s effectiveness by assessing LEA actions, such as if the LEA asks the right questions of vendors while procuring services, if the LEA monitors the implementation of vendor services, if the LEA provides high-quality services itself, and if the LEA monitors its own implementation of services. While the OFSTED reviews and the quality designations are independent, once created, the reports become the government’s accountability mechanism and inform sanctions or restrictions placed on low-performing schools and LEAs.



# SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGIES USING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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This publication profiles three strategies England uses to support schools and LEAs in turnaround, all of which use private vendors to some extent. The first strategy involves using a school-based management approach, as opposed to the LEA having decision-making authority for the school's budgets and decisions, which allows individual schools to contract for education services with the LEAs or external vendors of their choice. This strategy can allow a strong school leader to turn around the school by providing the most effective services and supports from the most qualified provider. The second strategy involves targeting whole-school turnaround by allowing high-performing "sponsoring" organizations—which can be individual, autonomous schools or larger education management organizations—to take over the management of a chronically low-performing school. Finally, the third strategy involves temporarily outsourcing the management of a low-performing LEA with a number of low-performing schools to a private vendor to turn it around.

## Impacting Quality of Services via School-Based Management

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In England, as in the United States, schools have historically been run by LEAs, and those governing bodies controlled budgets, hiring, and policymaking. In the late 1980s, based on the Education Reform Act of 1988, a shift occurred toward providing schools total control over their budgets and autonomy from traditional decision-making authorities. The Act introduced the Local Management of Schools (LMS), whereby individual schools, rather than the LEA, were in charge of hiring staff, monitoring the budget, hiring the headteacher (i.e., the school principal), and defining the school's policies and procedures.

Each Local Borough Council<sup>5</sup> (local government) is responsible for its own education system, and each school has its own governing body

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<sup>5</sup> Local Borough Councils (which are regional/neighborhood governance structures) include an education division, which is the local education authority or school district (i.e., within London [inner and outer London], there are 32 Local Borough Councils).

(essentially a school board and called a school council).<sup>6</sup> As a result of LMS, the LEA may only keep 3% of total funds for administrative costs, so the LEA must provide high-quality services that schools want to purchase to maintain sufficient funding and remain open (T. Yates, personal communication, June 6, 2013). LMS empowers school leaders to make decisions for their building, while ensuring that LEAs actively work to earn their customers and income.

Adonis (2012) perceived some of the effects of LMS as follows:

By delegating budgets from LEAs to schools, LMS turned headteachers and governors into...proper headteachers and governors. [They] now had legal responsibility for the school's budget and the appointment and dismissal of staff. Furthermore, school budgets under LMS were based largely on pupil numbers, so parental choice came to matter as never before because income rose and fell in response to a school's popularity. (Chapter 2, para. 61)

The shift to LMS also created a new market for high-quality school services. Prior to school-based management, LEAs provided services (e.g., student supports, curricular alignment, transportation, food services, professional development) directly to schools, but the quality greatly varied. Some schools with high-functioning LEAs received strong supports while other schools in low-functioning LEAs were essentially on their own. As a result, dysfunctional LEAs often resulted in—and continue to result in—poorly supported, struggling schools.

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**6 Each individual school has its own governing body, which is in charge of hiring, evaluating, and removing the headteacher; setting strategies; monitoring the budget; defining policies; and managing performance of the school and all contractors. The school's Board usually ranges from 10–20 members (called governors) and includes school, staff, parents, and the LEA representatives. For traditional schools, the Board chair is elected by members; for academies, the chair is appointed by the sponsoring organization (Adonis, 2012).**

However, under the school-based management approach, individual schools could purchase services that best met their needs from either local government agencies (which could be either the school's LEA or an LEA in a totally different region) or from private vendors. Under this approach, the organizational structure of the provider (i.e., whether it is an LEA or a private vendor) is no longer a deciding factor, as the headteacher is able to purchase the highest quality services for the most competitive prices and, thus, has the power to shift the market for school services due to increased competition. In addition, some LEAs specialize in various services (e.g., special education support services), which encourages collaboration between LEAs to better meet the needs of schools.

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## Turning Around Individual Schools via Academies

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Academies, which are similar in nature to charter schools in the United States, are self-governed, independent, government-funded schools. They were initially designed as a way to turn around chronically low-performing comprehensive schools,<sup>7</sup> but several types of academies now exist. For instance, one type of academy is a *converter academy*. In 2010, high-performing government-funded schools received the option to convert to academies (thereby becoming converter academies), which allowed them to leave their LEAs, own their own land and buildings, manage their own assets, receive a one-time payment of £25,000,<sup>8</sup> and report directly to the DfE (Adonis, 2012). The converter academy model serves as an incentive for schools to become high-performing schools, while also increasing the number of independently managed, government-funded schools.

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**7 Comprehensive schools are traditional neighborhood schools that do not select pupils based on aptitude or achievement. They include primary and secondary grades.**

**8 Approximately \$40,000.**

Because of this report's focus on school turnaround, this section concentrates primarily on the original type of academy: *sponsored academies*. These are low-performing, state-funded schools in *special measures* that are essentially taken over by high-performing schools or organizations with the goal of making major improvements. As stated in the Accountability section, if OFSTED places a school in *special measures*, it means that one or more areas of school quality are deemed inadequate and the school is assessed as not having the capacity to improve on its own. Thus, schools in *special measures* must develop a plan to turn around their performance, and that plan must be approved by OFSTED. Most schools in *special measures* are highly encouraged, and often mandated, to find an external partner to help manage the school and turn it around. Once a sponsoring partner (either a high-performing school or a private organization) agrees, the low-performing school becomes a sponsored academy, receives the benefits of autonomy from its original geographically-based LEA (though it is closely monitored and supported by its sponsoring school), and receives the support of an external partner (A. McCully, group communication, October 21, 2013). The school in *special measures* may pair with an individual sponsoring school or could become part of a chain of schools. As currently designed, sponsored academies must remain affiliated with their sponsoring organizations indefinitely.

According to Adonis (2012), the design for this model is based on the "ambition to save comprehensive education, not to bury it. But to do this required breaking the umbilical cord" (Chapter 5, para. 52). Low-performing schools that received a *special measures* designation, often situated within low-performing LEAs, were deemed to be unlikely to have existing staff with the skill sets and knowledge to radically turn around the school on their own. While external consultants could come in temporarily, according to Adonis (2012), such reformers would likely need to battle against engrained

systems and structures, making a sponsored approach more prudent:

[It] became clear that [what low-performing schools] needed wasn't incremental improvement, but fundamental reinvention. They needed to be closed and replaced by schools with a fundamentally new and better ethos, new and better governance, new and better leadership, new and better teaching, new and better curriculum, new and better facilities, new and better extra-curricular activities, [and] new and better parental and community engagement. (Chapter 2, para 53)

The sponsored academies model was designed with the intention of "re-starting" the underperforming schools in order to enable dramatic improvements as quickly as possible.

While finding school leaders willing to lead struggling schools in addition to their own high-performing schools could be seen as a barrier to the sponsored academies approach, many headteachers thrive on the opportunity to sponsor low-performing schools. There is a common sentiment among educators that being a headteacher of just one school is not enough; one must be a headteacher of multiple schools to be a great headteacher. This mindset supports the academies movement as strong headteachers are willing to take on multiple schools.

Schools first gaining independence from their LEAs through the converter academies program and then acting as a sponsoring organization to low-performing schools all under the leadership of a strong headteacher, can be found across the country. Comberton Village Academy became a converter academy in 2011, then sought out schools that they could support via the sponsored academies program. Comberton now sponsors two formerly low-performing schools, in addition to helping to launch a free school in an underserved area and launching a sixth form (an optional two years of university preparation for secondary school students) in one of

its sponsored schools.<sup>9</sup> Comberton has a newly created Academy Trust that takes on the management of its new schools, appoints governors for each new school, and works to ensure that the school and community share the Comberton values. The Trust holds a training academy for the deputy heads of the sponsored schools, while the headteacher of the sponsoring school (Comberton Village Academy) becomes headteacher for all schools in the Trust. While taking on low-performing schools is a risk, the headteacher of Comberton reflects that he can now utilize economies of scale to recruit new teachers for employment across the trust (as opposed to recruiting for individual, sometimes hard-to-staff schools), to retain substitute teachers, and to share specialists within the network (S. Munday, personal communication, October 22, 2013).

In contrast, the Evelyn Grace Academy was placed in *special measures* and had to find a sponsor that would help the school turn around. Evelyn Grace became part of the Absolute Return for Kids (ARK) chain, and ARK's trustees appointed a series of strong headteachers. According to the current headteacher of Evelyn Grace, while the transition to becoming a sponsored academy within the ARK chain was not always smooth, there were benefits to being part of a larger network of schools:

At the beginning of the partnership, we told ARK to go away because there were too many consultants in the building, and we couldn't organize ourselves. Eventually, ARK did provide additional supports to us. They can act quickly when there are problems compared to the locals who allow things to fail for too long. (D. Hanson, group communication, October 24, 2013)

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**9 More information about Comberton can be found at [www.combertonvc.org](http://www.combertonvc.org).**

## **Influence of the Community Technical Colleges on the Academies Model**

England's City Technical Colleges (CTCs), secondary schools that predate the academies, influenced the design of the academies model. The CTCs were seen as successful models due to their strong governance, independence from local authority control, ethos of success, and consistent standards.

Adonis (2012), one of the main creators and advocates of the academy model, highlights a number of features of the CTC model that he desired to incorporate into the academies program. He reflects that the CTCs had

highly capable and effective governing sponsor-managers, who ran their schools free of the shifting sands of local and national education bureaucracies. The sponsors were not "here today, gone tomorrow," like all too many local education authority chief education officers. They were making long-term commitments to their schools...The sponsors set ambitious goals and ran their governing bodies in a businesslike way to achieve these goals. Strong headteachers were appointed and supported by these sponsors, instilling an ethos of success, discipline, and high standards in every aspect of CTCs' work. (2012, Chapter 3, para. 85)

Adonis wanted to take the strongest aspects of the CTC model and apply them to the academy model to turn around the growing number of failing comprehensive schools across the country. Like the CTC model, the academy model allows a sponsoring organization to guide the school, appoint a strong headteacher and trustees, and then essentially let the headteacher and trustees run the school on their own, with additional supports and services provided by the sponsoring academy when needed. While academy sponsors have a great deal of freedom from the government, "the management freedom of sponsors [does not give them] permission to 'run schools



as they see fit.’ Every academy is funded by the state on a contract stipulating key requirements in terms of admissions, curriculum, performance, and financial probity” (Adonis, 2012, Chapter 7, para. 35). Academies are inspected by OFSTED, and their performance data is published in the same way as other government-funded schools. Therefore, their results are subject to the scrutiny of the public, the government, and the sponsoring organization.

### **Initial Resistance to the Academies Model**

The academies model, which initially only featured sponsored academies, launched in 2000 under Prime Minister Tony Blair. While some controversy surrounded the initial launch, DfE generally managed to design and implement the model with little fanfare. Political advisors hoped to build proof points of the model before expanding rapidly and drawing national attention (Adonis, 2012). The Academies Act of 2010 expanded the academies program by increasing the number of sponsored academies and introducing converter academies and an additional governance model, free schools.

Once the academies movement took hold and began to expand, there was pushback from trade unions and local authorities, the latter of whom feared they would lose control of some of their schools (and potential income). The academy movement was viewed as a threat by some traditionalists and was articulated as a plot to encourage comprehensive schools to differentiate themselves, which was considered a negative. Adonis reflects that opponents “feared [the academies] would encourage competition between schools, which was worse [than the status quo]” (Adonis, 2012, Chapter 3, para. 40).

### **Refinement of the Academies Model**

Despite the criticisms described above, only a few adjustments have been made to the original academy model. The first refinement removed an

earlier requirement that sponsors were responsible for contributing funds for the launch of the schools they were sponsoring (funds that were often used for capital expenses and facility remodeling). The second refinement allowed LEAs to co-sponsor academies with another organization.<sup>10</sup> The latter change encouraged more authority-wide turnaround strategies and made it easier for local councils/governments to embrace the idea of the academies model, as it no longer threatened the LEA to such a great extent. Under this adjustment, the primary sponsor could not be the LEA, and the primary sponsor maintained the authority to control the partnership and appoint the majority of governors overseeing the sponsored academy (Adonis, 2012). This refinement helped improve public support of the academies model, as it recognized that turning around entire systems may be more effective than just targeting individual schools.

Moving forward, some education reformers recommend that successful sponsored academies that are judged as *outstanding* by OFSTED should have the right to either switch chains/sponsors or become a free-standing academy on their own (Adonis, 2012). Such a change could allow continued innovation of academies and the ability to better differentiate schools to meet needs of individual communities. It could also encourage sponsored schools to improve substantially in order to achieve autonomy and would ensure that the chains continue providing high-quality services and supports (or risk losing their customers if a particular school felt the chain’s services were no longer needed).

### **Outcomes of the Academies Model**

The first set of data on the academies was released in 2005 profiling three years since the first academies opened and showed student performance improving at rates faster than the national average. In addition, supportive school

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<sup>10</sup> Modeled in a number of areas, including Hackney, Manchester, and Southwark (Adonis, 2012).

reports from OFSTED which described the effectiveness of the academies model helped counter opponents' arguments (Adonis, 2012). In 2007, the National Audit Office (England's version of the U.S. General Accountability Office) released the first independent assessment of the academies program and cited their success (specific data points follow). This early study helped bring the academy program to scale more quickly, as the data demonstrated the program was effective, strong sponsors were encouraged to take on additional schools (forming chains of schools), and new sponsors entered the market.

Additional independent studies examined the progress of the academies program between 2000 and 2012 and found the academies to be successful on four important measures: improved exam results, popularity among parents, a positive impact on neighboring schools, and a strong impact combating disadvantage (National Audit Office, 2009, 2010, 2012). Combined, the NAO studies found:

- Student achievement in academies improves faster than the national average of schools with students with similar demographics (as measured by performance on GCSE exams [General Certificate of Secondary Education—an academic qualification awarded in specific subjects]).
- The rate of improvement in student performance is especially strong in the academies that have been open the longest.
- Academies that opened in 2002 demonstrated student performance growth at three times the national average; those that opened between 2003 and 2006 showed student performance growth at double the national average.
- Academies have two student applicants for every place available in their school, while most comprehensive schools they replaced were undersubscribed.
- Student exam results in sponsored

secondary academies improve far faster than in other secondary schools (their rate of improvement has exceeded that of other secondary schools annually for a decade).

- Academies have achieved rapid improvements in pupil attendance, reduced the number of NEETs [school-aged children Not in Education, Employment, or Training], and shown a clear increase in performance compared to the schools they replaced.

A researcher from the London School of Economics, Stephen Machin, completed several studies on the academies program. While his research included some mixed results, he did find that GCSE performance improved faster at sponsored academies than other comparable schools (Machin, 2010).

Data related to the proportion of low-income students served by the academies have caused some debate between proponents and opponents. Two studies found that the proportion of children from very poor families is lower in academies than the predecessor failing schools they replaced; one of the studies also found that the proportion of low-income students in academies is still significantly higher than the national average (Adonis, 2012). Some opponents of the academies have contended that academies are taking a disproportionate number of middle-class students and/or skimming higher-performing and higher-income students from other schools. Proponents typically respond that despite the slightly lower numbers of minority or low-income students in academies versus the schools they replaced, overall, the academies still serve higher proportions of low-income students than other schools.

Related to this issue, a director of one of London's local education authorities states, "I don't think we improve the schools in Southwark by getting middle-class kids in. I think the middle class realised [sic] what a good deal the schools were after we improved them" (Baars et al., 2014, p. 48). Recent analysis of the London education system found that there is no significant

correlation between the varying levels of gentrification in London neighborhoods and the rates of improvement in various measures of student achievement, meaning that the quality of education improved (partially due to the academies movement), as opposed to the quality remaining the same but student demographics changing (Baars et al., 2014). To help answer questions raised by this debate, demographic shifts of students and communities must be researched further to determine their causes and whether students in gentrified neighborhoods are receiving improved education regardless of whether they attend an academy or a traditional neighborhood school.

Since students who have the opportunity to select which school they want to attend choose the academies suggests that academies are more desirable than other community schools. According to some, seeing low-performing local schools transition into successful sponsored academies may encourage traditional local schools to improve as well—which serves all local students regardless of income or admissions procedures (Adonis, 2012; M. Taylor, personal communication, October 21, 2013). Other education leaders suggest that the academies program “[applied] pressure for improvement across the system through the existence of an alternative form of governance” (Baars et al., 2014, p. 77).

The Borough of Hackney is an example of the impact of the academies model on the broader LEA structures. Fifteen years ago, Hackney’s students achieved performance levels at less than half the national average. Now, five successful new academies coexist with seven preexisting comprehensive schools, “all of whose results have increased such that the borough’s [student performance] results have been around the national average for the last three years” (Adonis, 2012, Chapter 7, para. 13).

Overall, the academies model seems to be producing positive results, with some minor exceptions that the DfE works to address. According to one DfE official, “The majority of

sponsored academies are thriving under great leadership. Their [student achievement] results are improving far faster than in other state-funded secondary schools. This is despite sponsored academies taking over from schools that were consistently underperforming, which can take time to reverse” (Press, 2013, p. 1). However, along with this success, he also notes that there are pockets of low-performance among academies:

Results in a minority of sponsored academies remain stubbornly low. We will not tolerate long-term underperformance in any school, including in an academy. That is why this government issues pre-warning letters and warning notices. The evidence shows that academies respond well to these warnings, achieving on average much better [student performance] results afterwards. However, as with maintained schools, if these academies still do not make the progress we expect, we will take further action. This may result in a change to the sponsorship arrangements. (Press, 2013, p. 1)

To date, DfE has required a handful of sponsored academies to change their sponsors due to substantial governance problems or a lack of student achievement (Paton, 2014). As of December 2013, there were 912 sponsored academies and 2,532 converter academies in England. Since 2011, pre-warning letters have been written to 25 academy trusts which oversee about 34 academies; of those, there have been only six cases in which DfE required a change in sponsor due to a chain’s inability to correct specified problems (DfE, 2013).

## Chains and the Market

If one measures the success of the academies program by the expansion of the education services market, the program appears to be working. Since the academies program launched in 2000:

- The number of sponsors has increased greatly.

- Individual high-performing schools have chosen to become sponsors of low-performing schools and/or have chosen to become chains that sponsor several low-performing schools.
- Some converter academies, which may remain independent, have chosen to join sponsor chains because of the additional supports and networking they provide.
- Some LEAs have become involved in the academies program by co-sponsoring school turnarounds.
- Many academies now offer a university preparatory program (sixth form), which indicates that 1) students want to remain part of that academy for additional years, and 2) the quality of education has improved so that students feel they are being adequately prepared for university.

Across England, sponsorship is diffused across many organizations. As of 2012, there were more than 150 sponsors of academies, so power is highly diffused amongst the sponsors. Of these, 50 sponsor more than one academy, but only seven are sizeable chains sponsoring more than 10 academies each (Adonis, 2012). While the market includes a mix of sponsoring organizations, including high-performing schools that decided to take on a low-performing school, DfE recently started limiting the growth of a few of the larger chains (Press, 2013). It is unclear if those restrictions will be removed if chains can demonstrate improvement or if new legislation and/or policies will limit the number of schools a sponsor is permitted to manage.

As mentioned previously, although converter academies are allowed to remain autonomous and unaffiliated, a number of them have recently started joining chains of sponsored academies. According to Adonis (2012), this has,

in effect creat[ed] a two-tier membership with sponsored academies being directly governed by chains while converter

academies join as (in effect) associated members without a hard governance dimension. About a quarter of the first 1,775 converter academies have joined, or founded, chains in this way, and as of March 2012, one in ten of all secondary schools is sponsored by, or belongs to, a chain [as a sponsored or a converter academy]. (Chapter 10, para. 82)

The new trend of converters joining chains may also impact the market of chain organizations. While sponsored academies are unable to change sponsors (unless directed by DfE due to egregious performance or governance problems), converters have the ability to change sponsors as they choose, which could theoretically increase the pressure on chains to provide high-quality services to their schools.

Another sign that the academies model may be affecting the education market relates to the existence of the sixth form. In England, sixth form refers to years 11 and 12 of a student's education, which are integral to preparation for entering higher education. Students who choose to participate in sixth form may select from a number of schools, some of which are special sixth form colleges that are separate from traditional secondary schools. Thus, there is competition to attract and enroll sixth form students because they can choose where they attend. While failing comprehensive schools rarely have sixth forms, they are now the norm in academies. All but 29 of the 203 sponsored academies opened in 2000 have a sixth form. The addition of sixth forms into the academies indicates the academies' improved academic rigor and increased expectations of students, which results in a solid academic learning environment that some students choose to be part of for an additional two years.

Additional research on the performance of the various sponsoring chains and the impact of their rapid expansions is needed to examine their impact on student achievement and their possible impact on surrounding neighborhood schools. Research studies could examine several questions:

Which chains are most effective and why? Are certain chains more effective in supporting specific student and neighborhood demographic needs? How does the inclusion of converter academies impact an academy chain and its existing sponsored academies?

## Outsourcing Local Education Authorities Model

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Low-performing local education authorities (LEAs) managing low-performing schools is an all too frequent trend in England and elsewhere. Adonis (2012) believes that low-performing LEAs likely do not have the skills, structures, or initiatives in place to successfully turn around their schools and sustain those changes. To address instances in which an LEA is judged to be chronically underperforming and in which the LEA does not have the capacity to improve on its own, England has another turnaround model that involves temporarily outsourcing management of the entire LEA to a private vendor. In the U.S., a similar realization led to the creation of a new market of vendors, Lead Turnaround Partners (LTPs), that contract with LEAs to turn around low-performing schools or at least improve them substantially under a three-year contract (Corbett, 2011). LTPs work specifically with schools, but many also work to influence the behaviors, practices, and policies of the LEA. In England, the government skipped the step of starting with the schools for cases of extreme negligence and instead went straight to the LEAs.

In 1998 and 1999, led by education reformers Andrew Adonis and David Blunkett, an effort began to dramatically improve the performance of LEAs that the English government had determined “were incompetent or positively harmful at the task of school improvement. And they were generally at their worst in the inner-city areas where school improvement was most needed” (Adonis, 2012, Chapter 3, para. 60). The ultimate

goal of the effort was to enable LEAs to develop “effective leadership and a mindset to support [its] schools to become strong self-governing institutions” (Adonis, 2012, Chapter 3, para. 63). However, in order to achieve that goal, the LEA required a turnaround of its own management and administrative practices; under this new approach, this was achieved by outsourcing management of the entire LEA to an external vendor with substantial experience in supporting schools and LEAs.

### **Case Study: Outsourcing the Management of the London Borough of Islington’s LEA**

To illustrate the steps involved in this turnaround model, this section will describe the outsourcing of the London Borough of Islington’s LEA (hereafter referred to as Islington). A 1999 OFSTED review found that Islington’s LEA was “in disarray.” The report stated that there were “failures of vision, strategy, planning, and management in many areas. Overall, the LEA had lost the confidence of the schools and the parents. The Secretary of State, in charge of education, declared the LEA unfit for turning themselves around and issued a direction contracting out most of the LEA’s statutory functions” (Reform, 2011, p. 16). Significant low student performance<sup>11</sup> in combination with a strategic inability to manage an effective and efficient LEA were the primary factors why the Secretary of State ordered the Islington LEA to have its management outsourced (Cambridge Education, 2009).

Islington was not alone—in 2000, England’s Secretary of State identified nine chronically low-performing LEAs as not having the capacity to improve themselves; the management of all of those LEAs was also outsourced to the private sector. Five of the nine LEAs were based in London boroughs and became part of the London Challenge education reform strategy, which took place from 2003–11.

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**11 OFSTED identified 8 of 44 primary (elementary) schools and 1 of 8 secondary (high) schools in Islington as needing special measures or having serious weaknesses (Cambridge Education, Visitors from the USA (2009) PowerPoint Presentation.).**

### ***Contract to Manage Islington's LEA***

After Islington was identified as a chronically low-performing LEA, Cambridge Education Associates (CEA) was contracted to manage Islington. Details of this partnership provide an example of this LEA-outsourcing model, which has resulted in improvements in some of England's poorest performing LEAs (including Islington and Lincolnshire).

The DfE ran the procurement process for selection of the vendors to manage Islington (K. Hackwell, personal communication, October 25, 2013). The contract between Islington and CEA began in April 2000 and was planned to run for a maximum of seven years at a cost of £11.5 million per year, which included all costs related to managing an LEA (e.g., school and LEA staff salaries, transportation, curriculum materials; London Borough of Islington, 2000). CEA worked in Islington under a fixed management fee of £600,000 a year (this was the fixed cost that went directly to CEA to manage Islington). Any savings earned through increased efficiency or streamlined services went back to the LEA. Each of the many performance measures was linked to either a monetary fine for lack of improvement or a performance bonus for meeting or exceeding goals (T. Yates, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

### ***Logistics of the Partnership Between CEA and Islington***

Most services traditionally provided by the LEA were outsourced to CEA, including school improvement, personnel, day-to-day finance decisions, payroll, inspection, school leader support, and special education services. A press release from Islington's government discussed the issue of privatization: "The work that schools do themselves is not being outsourced, and neither the schools nor service are being 'privatized.'" Islington LBC, through its education committee, will retain responsibility for key decisions, such as approval of the education development plan, the budget and, as the client, for monitoring

the performance of the contractor" (London Borough of Islington, 2000, p. 2).

In Islington, CEA maintained contact with the local governing boards of each school and the Islington council,<sup>12</sup> but limited their involvement. As a result, in the first four to five years of CEA's management of Islington, the council expressed that they felt isolated from the process of the LEA's improvement. However, in the second phase (after 2005), CEA and the council developed a stronger partnership. A CEA staff member reflected that it was "a balancing act to ensure that the councils have the ownership and buy-in but that we could do our jobs. Initially, [the council members] thought they ran the schools" (T. Yates, personal communication, June 6, 2013). CEA provided significant training to the council members and the local governing bodies, especially in regards to asking the right questions to hold all parties accountable (M. Taylor, personal communication, October 21, 2013).

In the beginning of the contract with CEA, the Secretary of State's staff were key stakeholders in the partnership. There were monthly meetings of all players, and all strived to maintain an open and transparent process, especially as the press closely watched the effort. Leaders were upfront about which strategies were working and which were not (e.g., initial communications plans and focusing on programmatic solutions). In order to maintain a productive and trusting working relationship with Islington, CEA made a conscious effort not to just come into the district and remove a large number of staff. However, over time, some Islington staff were removed (or chose to leave), but CEA earned local trust by working with the existing staff as much as possible (T. Yates, personal communication, June 6, 2013). A good working relationship with the unions was also important, and, from day

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**12 Each London Borough has a local administrative council, which is a governing authority responsible for areas such as children's services (including education), housing, social services, and roads. CEA's contract was directly with the London Borough of Islington Council.**

one, CEA worked with at least ten different unions representing Islington district staff.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Monitoring Improvement of the LEA***

At the beginning of the contract between Islington and CEA, the partnership had over 400 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor and achieve, and each had a monetary fine or a bonus attached to it. The Secretary of State and CEA jointly developed a majority of the KPIs in order to ensure that the partnership was helping to improve Islington's performance. The number of KPIs was reduced as the partnership progressed and the schools and district began to improve. By the end of the partnership, there were eleven major KPIs, in addition to monthly, quarterly, and annual goals (approximately 100) used to address all areas of service delivery (M. Taylor, personal communication, October 21, 2013). The KPIs had a focus on student performance results but also included indicators related to "school exclusions, school attendance, statutory duties, strategic plans and polices, and surveys and customer feedback" (Reform, 2011; see Appendix A for sample KPIs).

A summary of CEA's work in Islington documents that Islington "earned" decreased monitoring from OFSTED and the Secretary of State's office due to making drastic improvements. According to a summary document produced by CEA (n.d.) describing the partnership in action, After two years, the Government carried out a formal inspection of how the education service was being run in the Borough and declared that 'the tide has turned in Islington.' Islington has been recognized as the most improved Borough in England for the past two years, and the

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**13 In the UK, a number of national unions exist, and individual teachers have the ability to select which union they want to participate in or not participate at all. At the outset of the project there were 5 teacher unions, 3 administrator unions, and 2 unions representing other staff (i.e., janitors, catering) actively operating in Islington.**

Department for Education and Skills officials, who have continued to monitor progress closely, have recently judged this to be so satisfactory that a proposed further inspection was deferred to early 2006. (p. 4)

### ***Phase-Out Process***

Two years before the end of the first contract, CEA and the Islington council presented a revised plan to the government. Based on improved student performance and increased capacity at the local level, the Secretary of State planned to remove the directive that required Islington to outsource the management of its LEA. Yet, Islington recognized additional services were still needed. Accordingly, the council and CEA developed a voluntary partnership that transferred management and responsibility for school operations back to Islington but also included a support role for CEA (London Borough of Islington, 2005). Normally, the Islington council would be expected to receive competitive bids for such services, but they requested an exemption from the requirement due to the successful track record of CEA's role in the LEA (London Borough of Islington, 2005). The federal governing bodies supported the proposed plan, and Islington and CEA entered into a new seven-year contract.

### ***Results of Outsourcing Management of the LEA***

When Islington took back full authority over the LEA in 2013, it was rated one of the top ten LEAs in England. In addition, "92% of the Borough's schools were judged by OFSTED to be 'good' or 'outstanding' compared with 70% nationally, and 75% of pupils were achieving five A to C grades at GCSE. The achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils compared to the rest of students [in mandatory secondary education]<sup>14</sup> was only 12.6 percentage points, compared with 26.5 points nationally" (CEA, 2013).

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**14 In England, mandatory secondary education ends at age 16, which approximately equates to the conclusion of grade 10.**

Thirteen years after the takeover began, Mark Taylor, head of the Islington LEA, reflected, “School buildings are viewed as teaching and learning communities. Most are good, but others are outstanding. Staff meetings are all about instruction. Schools are autonomous in themselves. There’s high accountability with the school governing bodies, and all schools provide an annual progress report to the local authority” (Personal communication, October 21, 2013). In addition, skilled principals and senior leadership teams exist at each school, and they provide school-based professional development and training to staff, which decreases the need for a large central office staff.

Two independent studies, both requested by the Islington government, showed “good value” for the cost of the partnership. While the studies are not public documents, their results were used to support the decision to renew CEA’s contract with Islington twice. One of the reports stated, “Since the start of the contract, Islington has closed the gap with other similar authorities in areas where [their] previous performance had been poor” (London Borough of Islington, 2005, p. 4). The second study “indicates that there is a shared vision and focus on outcomes [between the local government and CEA], and that there is a widely held view that the relationship has moved from a traditional purchaser-provider model focused on inputs and costs towards a strategic partnership designed to deliver improved outcomes” (London Borough of Islington, 2005, p. 4).

One of the studies also reviewed the performance of the nine LEAs that were outsourced to the private sector across the country at the same time. The study found that, combined, the nine private sector-outsourced LEAs improved at a rate faster than the average performance of all the LEAs in England and that they improved more than LEAs that had similarly low levels of educational performance in 2000 (London Borough of Islington, 2005). That stated, outsourcing LEA management produced particularly strong results in some places, such as Islington and Hackney, but did not work as well in others, such as Southwark (Baars et al., 2014). With an eye on clearly defined performance indicators, an influx of highly capable LEA-level staff committed to creating a sustainable system, and a well-planned phase-out process, the practice of temporarily turning over management and administration of low-performing LEAs appears to be effective in England.



# CONCLUSION

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There are several lessons learned from the English models described above and recommendations that should be considered if the United States is to pursue similar policies. These lessons learned and recommendations fall into four main topic areas: research base, creating an expectation of shared responsibility, creating sustainable policies, and accountability. These areas impact the market forces of competition and supply-and-demand and inform recommendations for the United States.

## Research Base

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When England first launched these models, a research base to prove the success of the strategies did not exist. Research only began to demonstrate positive results for the academies program in 2005, five years after the inception of that model. It was imperative that enough time was given to allow the strategy to grow, embed itself in practice, and adapt to the changing needs

before any substantial changes were made. In the cases of these turnaround models, choices were made to implement them without an existing research base because students attending chronically failing schools were in dire need of improved education and could not wait for the research base to catch up with the urgent need for school improvement. While the programs and practices were monitored closely through KPIs and benchmark goals, the implementation of these models moved forward, with research on their impact collected along the way.

## Creating an Expectation of Shared Responsibility

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In England, there is an “expectation that good leaders don’t just manage one school, but that they must contribute to the system” (A. McCully, personal communication, October 21, 2013). A recent study examining the turnaround of London’s school system over the last

decade describes this concept as moral purpose: “Transformational leadership was driven by moral purpose, and a strong sense that leaders’ first responsibility was to optimize outcomes for learners and not to promote the ‘provider interest’” (Baars et al., 2014, p. 12). It should be noted that this moral purpose and shared responsibility was not always part of the English education system, but developed over the last fifteen years. The change in culture was due to a “no excuses” philosophy emboldened by the government, the London Challenge comprehensive education reform initiative, the creation of professional networks encouraged by the academies program, and the increased autonomies provided to headteachers (Baars et al., 2014). Incorporating this belief of shared responsibility for the education system into the United States could help create a more collaborative approach to school and district improvement.

The academies program expanded rapidly, but there may be a limit to the number of traditional sponsors who can take on schools in *special measures*. Allowing “outstanding” sponsored academies to leave their sponsor to become independent schools or to become sponsors for other low-performing schools would help bring in new sponsors while also freeing up the capacity of the existing sponsors. In addition, some education reformers in England advocate that other non-traditional sponsors—like private schools, universities, or even some businesses — could also take on lower-performing schools or systems (Adonis, 2012).

Adonis, creator and advocate of the sponsored academies program, often refers to ARK, the Absolute Return for Kids. The idea behind ARK is that, too often, education decisions are made due to their impact on the adults in the system. Instead, education leaders should accept their role impacting children’s futures and make all decisions related to the absolute return for kids. Despite common criticisms, the use of private vendors does not result in a lack of shared responsibility or a lack of focus on student needs. From a student’s perspective, the governance structure of a school is irrelevant, but the moral character of

the leaders (at the school, local, or network levels) is imperative to the strategic approach implemented and the quality of education provided.

## Creating Sustainable Policies

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When developing and implementing new policies and programs like those described in this paper, it is crucial to think not just of the processes needed to successfully implement and sustain them, but also to anticipate possible unintended consequences of implementation. For example, what happens to students who are expelled from academies—do they go back to the failing comprehensive schools? What happens to an LEA that does not improve after its management is outsourced, despite the partner’s best efforts?

In addition, any policy or program that spans decades must be designed to withstand changing politics, which can impact education budgets and national education leadership. Successful programs and policies should be designed to function regardless of the current particular political landscape. The focus should always be on measuring performance and improving student achievement, as opposed to simply implementing various popular strategies of the moment. This is also influenced by allowing school leaders the autonomy to modify course if the results achieved do not meet expectations (after appropriate analysis is completed to examine why a particular strategy is not as effective as intended).

## Accountability

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Accountability is a key feature to all three models described in this paper—various indicators are used to measure whether the adults in the schools and districts change their behaviors and actions and if the students improve their performance. The Department for Education sets the basic

requirements of each of the three strategies and retains control to revoke contracts if the partnerships do not perform (Adonis, 2012). Defining clear KPIs (see Appendix A for sample KPIs), incentives for improvement, and consequences for inaction or poor performance are necessary to implement any one of these three models with fidelity. In addition, OFSTED's independent inspections hold all schools, LEAs, and sponsors to the same set of expectations, regardless of the governance model. With high accountability comes high support. Under these models, schools and LEAs are not expected to improve on their own, but are provided a number of support systems to guide their turnaround efforts (Baars et al., 2014).

## Market Forces

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Turning around chronically low-performing schools and districts often depends on three main variables: high-quality teachers, high-quality school leaders, and high-quality governing bodies. Many past reform efforts in England, and the United States for that matter, targeted one or maybe two of those variables, but rarely did turnaround efforts of schools or LEAs target all three pieces simultaneously.

As demonstrated in England, strong school leaders are hired and held accountable for results; they prioritize instruction and rigor and focus their energy on improving teaching and the school environment. Governing bodies, including the LEA councils, the school councils, and sponsoring organizations, must respond to market needs or risk losing students and going out of business.

This market pressure breeds competition, and competition encourages the provision of quality services. In the United States, we acknowledge the importance of these three variables (teachers, school leaders, governing bodies) and target them with specific strategies (e.g., via teacher or leader training programs, professional development, mentorships, revising teacher or leader

certification standards), but rarely do we look at them as a collection of needs or, more importantly, a collection of solutions.

## Possible Implications for the United States

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The descriptions of the three school and district turnaround models presented in this paper offer details and insights into ways to improve public education through partnerships with the private sector. As indicated in this paper, research is emerging that shows these models are effective in improving the performance of many schools and districts. While these models take a more private-sector, free-market approach than most U.S. education initiatives, educators, practitioners, and policymakers in the United States may be able to learn and extract useful strategies from these turnaround strategies.

In comparison to England, many of our turnaround efforts are missing two key strategies:

- Embedding and growing strong and capable governance, and
- Having real incentives and real consequences to encourage better performance and higher quality services.

Each of the three models profiled in this paper requires strong and capable governance. "Governance can seem tedious and irrelevant to the work of schools. Educationalists often think so, and it almost never features in their discourse. But without strong and effective governance an institution rarely performs well, whether a school, a company, a charity, or a government." (Adonis, 2012, Chapter 7, para. 55) A strong school leader must understand how to procure services from external vendors, and her governing council must provide her with the authority and discretion to make decisions. A strong and capable sponsoring organization is crucial to the successful turnaround of a sponsored academy. In order to turn

around an entire LEA, the governing body of the LEA and the schools require significant skill and knowledge training to allow them to capably make decisions for their schools and the LEA as a whole. Developing strong and capable governance should not be an afterthought in any turnaround model. Once strong governance is in place, entities responsible for oversight must closely monitor performance and reward improvement and enact sanctions for not meeting expectations.

A turnaround is necessary when a school and its governing body have been allowed to neglect the needs of the community for too many years. The need for a turnaround is a last resort—it's a sign that the school or system has not provided a quality education to students. If they were businesses, these schools and LEAs would have been out of business long ago. Nevertheless, it is difficult to make real and lasting change to a public good without imposing ultimate consequences or “hammers.” In the United States, the federal School Improvement Grant program strives to make those changes occur. In addition, some states have the ability to take over individual schools and LEAs. That said, those very state agencies often lack the capacity to turn around the schools and LEAs.

The English recognize the public good of education should not be allowed to flounder year after year and that consequences must be enforced. Their system also allows the market to regulate quality by empowering school leaders to purchase services from whomever they wish, by allowing students and families to choose schools they believe are the best fit for them, and by holding external partners accountable for results. If goals are not met, there are consequences. If goals are exceeded, there are rewards.

The governance model of a school or LEA is irrelevant. A good school or LEA is a good school or LEA, regardless if it is managed by a traditional LEA, a charter management organization, a private vendor, or a hybrid structure. The English approach makes sense; it is based on logic, and research demonstrates its effectiveness. Entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, capitalism, and free market economies (with appropriate regulation) ensure the provision of equal opportunities and allow all to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. These are the foundations of the United States, yet we rarely see those philosophies manifest in practice in the education system.

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# APPENDIX A

## Sample Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from the 2010–11 CEA/Islington Contract

<b>KPI 1—Enjoy and Achieve: Levels of Attainment</b>	<b>Improve attainment at primary school</b>	1.1a	Proportion of pupils achieving level 4 or above in KS2 English
		1.1b	Proportion of pupils achieving level 4 or above in KS2 maths
		1.1c	Proportion of pupils achieving level 4 or above in English & maths
		1.1d	Proportion of pupils making 2 levels of progress in English
		1.1e	Proportion of pupils making 2 levels of progress in maths
	<b>Improve attainment at KS4</b>	1.2a	GCSE (or equivalent) -% 5 or more A* to C grades, including English and maths
		1.2b	GCSE (or equivalent) -% 5 or more A* to G grades, including English and maths
		1.2c	% in age group with at least an entry level qualification (1 GCSE or equivalent)
		1.2d	Increase the proportion of pupils achieving 3 or more A/A* grades year on year
		1.2e	Percentage of BME pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE
		1.2f	No secondary schools below floor target
		1.2g	Percentage of pupils from underachieving groups (defined in preceding September) gaining 5 or more A*-C grades including English & maths
	<b>Improve quality of teaching &amp; learning</b>	1.3	School inspection judgments on “how effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learner’s needs”
	<b>CEA contribution to EY attainment</b>	1.4	Inspection judgments in school settings on the quality and standards in the foundation stage

**KPI 2—Enjoy and Achieve 2: Schools Are Well Managed**

<b>Ensure all Islington schools provide at least a satisfactory standard of education</b>	2.1a	Number of schools in “special measures”
	2.1b	Number of schools with a “notice to improve”
	2.1c	Number of schools with notice to improve remaining in place for more than the agreed timeframe for improvement
<b>Ensure schools well led/managed</b>	2.2	School inspection judgments on “how effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners”
<b>Ensure effective financial management</b>	2.3a	No school sets a deficit budget without prior agreement of the Contractor and a plan to eliminate the deficit
	2.3b	Schools with a recovery plan to eliminate their deficit eliminate it within agreed timescales
<b>Schools are effective at self-review</b>	2.4	Inspection judgment now replaced with “The effectiveness of the school’s self-evaluation”
<b>Headteacher satisfaction with relevant management support services</b>	2.5a	Data management service
	2.5b	Budget and financial management service
	2.5c	Capital and asset management service
	2.5d	Personnel management service
	2.5e	Training services
	2.5f	Information Communication Technology (ICT) services
	2.5g	School improvement and development service
	2.5h	Support for headteachers as purchasers
	2.5i	Health and Safety service
<b>School Governance</b>	2.6a	% satisfied with advice and guidance given to governing body
	2.6b	% satisfied with advice and support given regarding school improvement
	2.6c	% satisfied with advice and support received regarding personnel issues



<b>KPI 3—Enjoy and Achieve 3: Schools Are Inclusive and Support Under-Performing Pupils</b>	<b>Improve school attendance</b>	3.1a	% of half days missed at primary schools
		3.1b	% of pupil enrolments with 64 or more sessions of absence in all secondary schools
	<b>Maintain low levels of attendance</b>	3.2a	Rate of permanent exclusions per 1000 of pupil population
		3.2b	Rate of fixed term exclusions per 1000 pupils primary schools
		3.2c	Rate of fixed term exclusions per 1000 pupils secondary schools
	<b>Ensure good standard of education for excluded pupils</b>	3.3a	Percentage of year 9 pupils reintegrated into mainstream school or appropriate provision who have been at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for 3 or more terms
		3.3b	Overall Attendance at all PRUs
		3.3c	Percentage of PRU pupils achieving at least an entry level qualification in English and mathematics
	<b>Provide an effective service for pupils with SEN</b>	3.4a	Percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks excluding exception cases as a proportion of all such statements issued in the year
		3.4b	Percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks cases as a proportion of all such statements issued in the year
		3.4c	Proportion of pupils with statements of Special Education Needs (SEN) in/co-located with mainstream schools
	<b>Improve the education of looked after children</b>	3.5a	Percentage of looked after children entered for 1 or more GCSEs at grades A*-G
		3.5b	Percentage of looked after children achieving 5+ A*-C grades
		3.6a	Percentage of pupils achieving level 5 in KS2 English
		3.6b	Percentage of pupils achieving level 5 in KS2 mathematics
3.6c		Achievement gap between pupils eligible for FSM and those not eligible at Key Stage 2 English & maths	

KPI 4—Enjoy and Achieve 4: Manage the Education “System” Effectively

<b>Ensure all mandatory obligations are met</b>	4.1a	Comply with all relevant Legislation and agreed LBI requirements to ensure services are delivered to meet mandatory obligations in the following areas
	(1)	Asset management, including health and safety and school place planning
	(2)	Budget and financial management
	(3)	Educational welfare and behaviour support services including PRUs
	(4)	Equalities
	(5)	HR and professional development
	(6)	ICT and management information services
	(7)	PR and communications
	(8)	School improvement work including implementation of national strategies
	(9)	SEN services
	4.1b	Annually agreed list of DCSF/OFSTED statutory returns completed on time
<b>Effective school admissions service</b>	4.2a	The percentage of Islington pupils being offered a stated preference by March 2nd
	4.2b	Percentage of newly arrived children without a school place (calculated from the date registered as missing education to the date admitted to a school)
	4.3a	Number of planning areas below 10% vacant places in primary schools
	4.3b	Number of vacant places as a percentage of total places in primary schools
	4.3c	Number of secondary schools with more than 25% of places vacant
	4.3d	Number of vacant places as a percentage of total places in secondary schools
<b>Implementation of the vision for secondary schools</b>	4.4	Agreed programme and timeline for “innovative” secondary school developments met (e.g., specialist schools, academies, BSF)
<b>Promotion of extended schools</b>	4.5	Proportion of Islington schools meeting the government’s extended schools requirements increases by 10 percentage points each year
<b>Headteacher satisfaction with relevant services</b>	4.6a	School management organization services
	4.6b	School admission service
<b>Delegation</b>	4.7	Increase the level of delegation to schools to enable the commissioning of services to further raise standards

<b>KPI 5—Stay Healthy</b>	<b>CEA/school contribution to increasing participation in sport and exercise</b>	5.1a	Inspection judgments on “The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles”
		5.1b	Percentage of pupils that participate in at least 2 hours of high quality PE/Sport in a typical week
		5.1c	Percentage of Islington schools participating in inter-school sports competition each term
	<b>CEA/ school contribution to reducing teen pregnancy/ improving outcomes for teen mothers</b>	5.2	Percentage of schools with an up to date Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) Policy
	<b>School participation in healthy schools scheme</b>	5.3a	Proportion of schools participating in healthy schools scheme (HSS)
		5.3b	Proportion of schools achieving national expectations in HSS
		5.3c	Local AC survey question “Support for the implementation of the healthy schools’ scheme from Contractor”
	<b>CEA/school contribution to improving quality of nutrition</b>	5.4	OFSTED Question “How well are learners cared for, guided and supported”
	<b>CEA/ school contribution to reducing smoking/ drug taking</b>	5.5	OFSTED Question “The behaviour of learners”
	<b>Feedback from key partners on CEA contribution to “be healthy”</b>	5.6	Joint Area Reviews/Asset Protection Agency (JAR/APA) rating for be healthy

<b>KPI 6—Stay Safe</b>	<b>CEA/school contribution to health and safety</b>	6.1a	The Contractor carries out agreed health and safety programme and produces reports and action plan within agreed timeframe
		6.1b	Inspection judgments on the extent to which learners adopt safe practices
	<b>CEA/ school contribution to child protection procedures</b>	6.2a	Child protection designation, training, and policies implemented
		6.2b	Provide a schools’ child protection service
	<b>CRB checks carried out in timely fashion</b>	6.3a	Percentage of new recruits requiring a Criminal Research Bureau (CRB) check who have started work in the current academic year for whom a check has been requested
		6.3b	Percentage of current employees for whom a renewal CRB check has been requested within three years
		6.3c	Percentage of new recruits who have started work in the current academic year whose CRB check was closed within 3 months of commencement of employment
	<b>Feedback from key partners on Contractor contribution to “stay safe”</b>	6.4	JAR/APA rating for stay safe

<b>KPI 7—Make a Positive Contribution</b>	<b>Schools report and follow up racist incidents</b>	7.1	Existing Contractor procedures to monitor and follow up on serious incidents are carried out
	<b>School contribution to pupil development</b>	7.2	Inspection judgments on “the extent of learners spiritual, moral, social and cultural development”
	<b>Reducing levels of bullying</b>	7.3	Inspection judgments on “how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can”
	<b>Consultation with children and young people</b>	7.4a	Contractor self-evaluation against Hear by Rights standard
		7.4b	Representation of pupils from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups at Pupil Parliament meetings
	<b>Work with parents</b>	7.5a	Secondary Schools Exhibition survey “How helpful did you find the information on arrangements for transfer?”
		7.5b	SEN parent survey “How have you found your contact with us?” over previous 12 months
		7.5c	SEN parent survey “Were the letters and information received helpful?”

<b>KPI 8—Achieve Economic Well-Being</b>	<b>Increasing levels of participation amongst 16-19 year olds and reducing pupils who become NEET</b>	8.1a	Proportion of pupils from Islington schools who continue in education or training, including work-based training, post 16
		8.1b	Proportion of pupils from Islington schools who continue in education post 16 on a level 2 course or higher
		8.1c	The % of entries in ICT, D&T Resistant Materials and PE/Sport achieving the equivalent of a GCSE grade C or above
		8.1d	Percentage of students attending increased flexibility programme achieving 5A* - G grades or equivalent at GCSE
	<b>Improving quality of education for 16-19 year olds</b>	8.2	Average point score for pupils entered for A/AS levels in school's sixth form





*For more information on school  
turnarounds please visit*

[www.centeronschoolturnaround.org](http://www.centeronschoolturnaround.org)