Learning from Failure

A Discussion Guide on High School Reform
Why focus on failure?

• We need to learn from past mistakes.

• Recognizing mistakes others have made can help you avoid similar ones.
In this report, you will find…

• A description of factors that contribute to reform failure

• A series of questions to guide discussion and help you avoid mistakes
Learning from failure

Why do school reforms fail?
Reasons reforms fail

Contextual factors

School-level factors

Nature of the reform

Powering educational systems by generating, translating and disseminating the best research, information and knowledge
Nature of the Reform

- Focus on structural changes only, not instructional
- Implementation of reforms without using data
School-level Factors

• Lack of support and buy-in from staff
• Skills and knowledge of staff
• Insufficient resources (including time)
• Teacher/administrator exhaustion and burn-out
• Teacher/administrator turnover
• School culture that values conformity
Contextual Factors

- Systemic nature of education
- Lack of consensus on goals of schooling
- “Iconic” notions of high school
- Lack of support and buy-in from community
- Multiple and incompatible reforms
Learning from Failure

• Successful reforms must be:
  – **Focused** on student learning;
  – Targeted and Coherent;
  – Inclusive; and
  – Accompanied by **adequate and appropriate resources**.
Applying Lessons Learned

Answer the following key questions:

1. **A focus on student learning**: How is your reform going to improve student learning?
2. **Focused and coherent**: What should you emphasize first? How are you going to make sure that everything you do is consistent?
3. **Inclusive**: How will you ensure stakeholder support for your work?
4. **Adequate and appropriate resources**: How will you ensure your staff has the capacity and time to do the work?
Applying Lessons Learned

• To what extent does your reform focus on improving student learning?
• To what extent does your reform take into account the systemic nature of education?
• To what extent is your reform targeted and coherent?
For more information…

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