

# *Struggling Schools*

Thinking Strategically Across ARRA Funds

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- It's about the kids.
- It's a civil rights AND economic issue.
- A sense of urgency
- Emphasis on building capacity at all levels
- Collaboration is key.
- Efforts must be *strategic*.
- Need to marry policy with pragmatism
- Resources are available—but will still be stretched.
- Excitement, anxiety, and overload

# Moving Away from One-Size-Fits-All

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Effective systems of support vary assistance by:

- Type
- Intensity
- Duration

*An accurate diagnosis of what is needed is critical.*

# Effective State System of Support

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- Transformation from “regulatory/compliance bureaucracies to more agile and proactive catalysts for school improvement”
- Builds systemic capacity for school improvement *and* addresses problem of low-performing schools
- Uses a system that takes student learning outcomes *over time* and school capacity into account
- Provides services and supports differentiated by need

# Two Key Diagnostic Elements

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- *Level of performance over time as measured by student learning outcomes, especially on state standards assessments*
- *School's operational strengths and weaknesses*

Together, the pattern of student learning outcomes *and* school capacity determine the *trajectory of improvement* needed.

## Differentiating Supports and Interventions By Desired Trajectory of Improvement and Diagnosis of Operations

Diagnostic Methods to Target Supports and Interventions

### Closure

Close school and  
disperse students

### Turnaround

External Review to Determine  
Turnaround Method;  
Coached, Leadership-Directed  
Self-Assessment in District Managed  
Turnarounds

### TURNAROUND

(kids stay, variable degree of  
staff replacement)

#### District Managed

- Wholesale staff replacement
- Targeted staff replacement and transformation

#### Re-Start

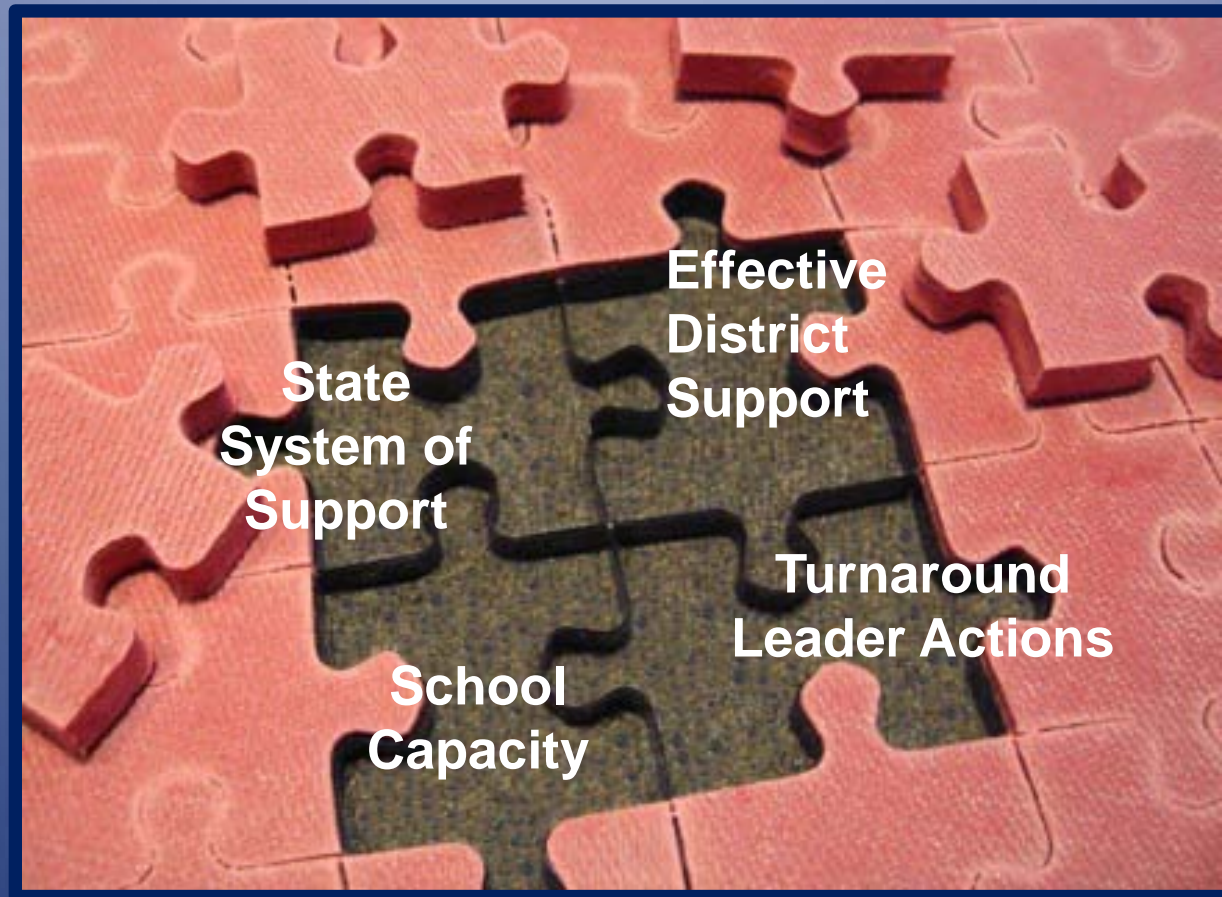
- Performance contract between district or state and external service provider to manage school
- Convert to charter school (district authorizes) or close and open a charter school (other authorizer) with priority for enrollment given to current students



Supports Differentiated by Diagnosis of Operations

Supports are differentiated by type, intensity, and duration.

# Making School Improvement Possible



**State  
System of  
Support**

**Effective  
District  
Support**

**School  
Capacity**

**Turnaround  
Leader Actions**

# The District Role

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- Clearly defined roadmap with “no excuses” message”
- Efforts coherent, comprehensive, and intentional
- Increased emphasis on curriculum and instruction
- Resources reorganized to better support school improvement efforts
- Clear assignment of accountability to schools—plus mixture of “tight and loose”
- Data-informed decision making

- Increased opportunities for staff collaboration
- *Intentional* use of professional development to support improvement efforts
- *Timely* intervention in schools making insufficient progress
- *Timely* assistance for students with academic difficulties
- Shift in role of central office staff from control and supervision to increased support and consultation

# School Turnarounds

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*Quick, dramatic, and sustained improvement*

What does emerging research—from inside and outside education—tell us about these organizations and their leaders? Some examples:

- Concentrate on big, fast payoffs in year one
- Focus on successful tactics, halt others
- Help staff to personally feel the “crisis” for children
- Measure and report progress frequently