When Bold Steps Are Needed:
What does it *really* take to turn around schools?

**Analysis and Recommendations
from the report produced by
Mass Insight Education & Research Institute, Inc.**

– Developed under a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation –

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The
Turnaround
Challenge

**Why America's best opportunity
to dramatically improve student achievement
lies in our worst-performing schools**

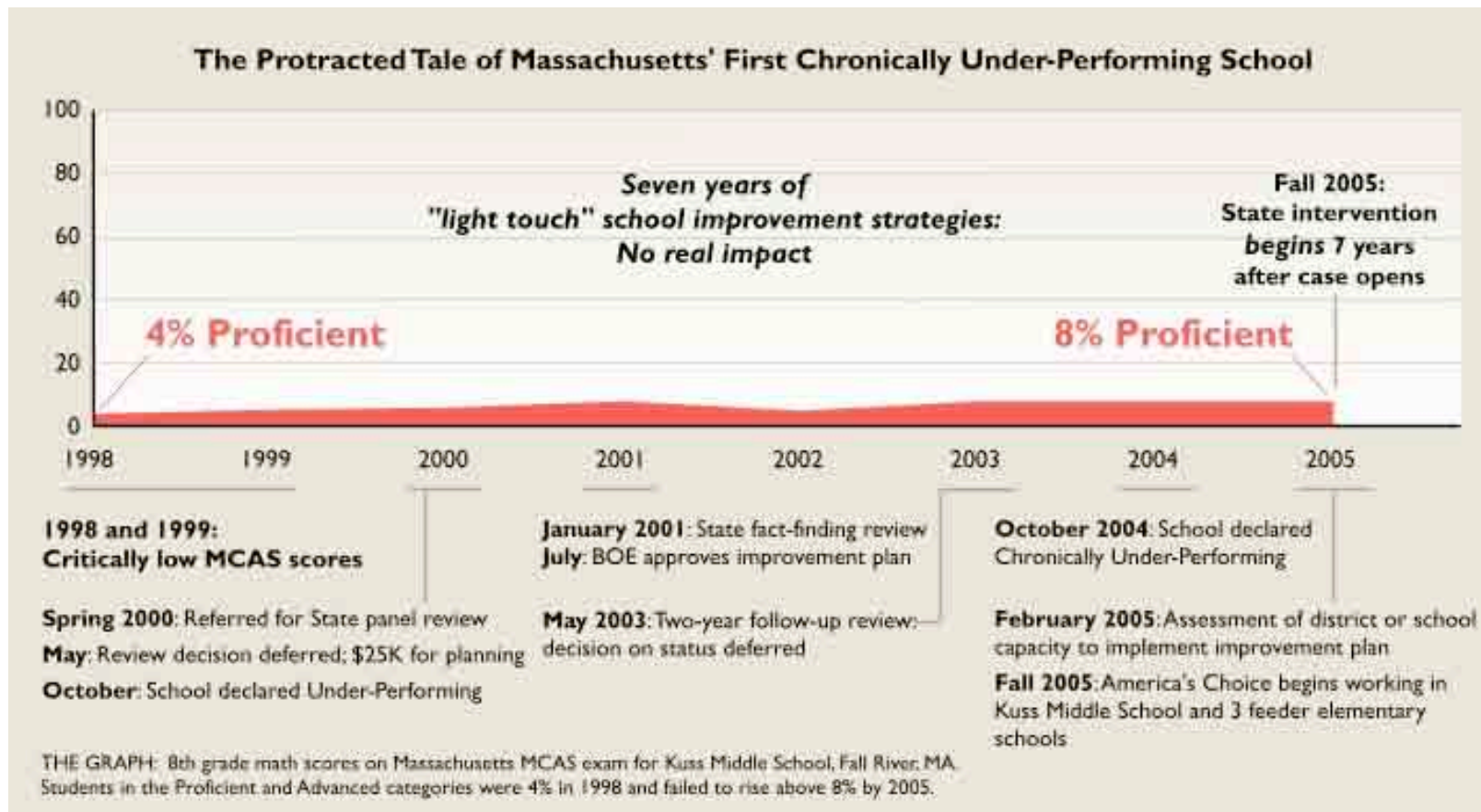New Research, Recommendations, and a Partnership Framework for States and School Districts

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Turnaround:
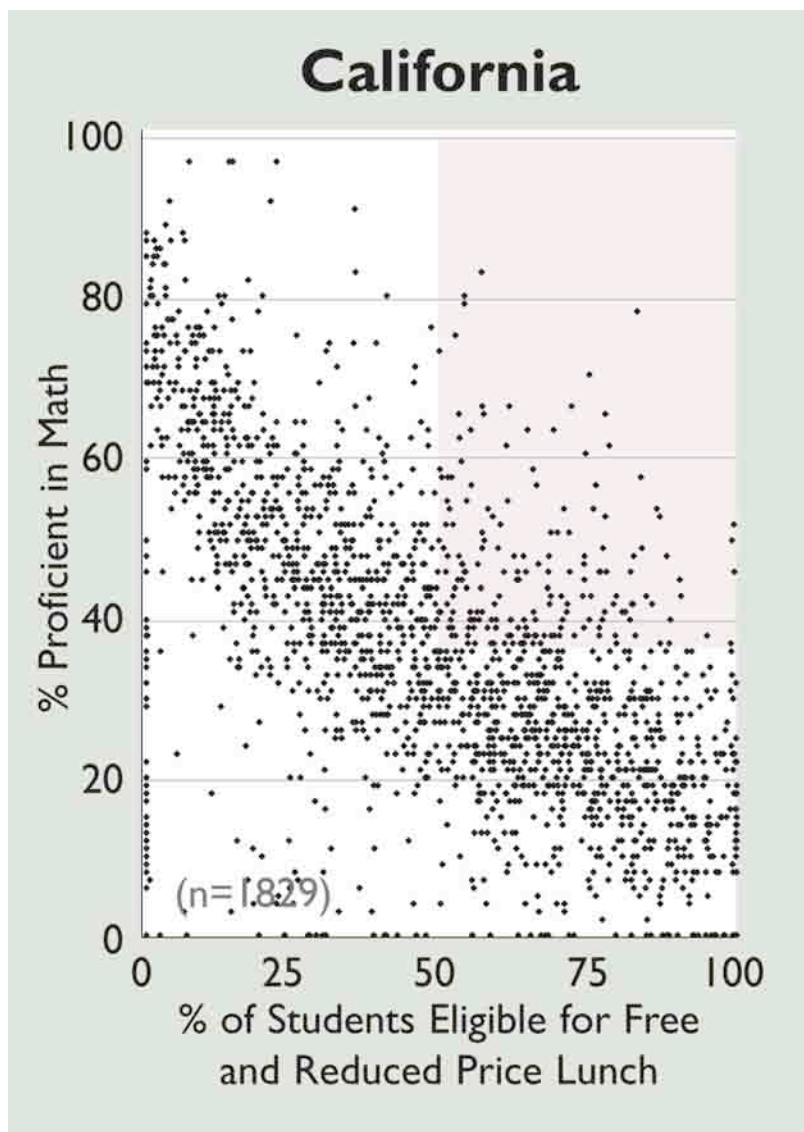**a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that**

a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years; and

b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization

The story of school turnaround to date:
marginal change = marginal results

The Protracted Tale of Massachusetts' First Chronically Under-Performing School

Seven years of "light touch" school improvement strategies: No real impact

4% Proficient

8% Proficient

Fall 2005: State intervention begins 7 years after case opens

1998 and 1999: Critically low MCAS scores

Spring 2000: Referred for State panel review
May: Review decision deferred; $25K for planning
October: School declared Under-Performing

January 2001: State fact-finding review
July: BOE approves improvement plan

May 2003: Two-year follow-up review: decision on status deferred

October 2004: School declared Chronically Under-Performing

February 2005: Assessment of district or school capacity to implement improvement plan

Fall 2005: America's Choice begins working in Kuss Middle School and 3 feeder elementary schools

THE GRAPH: 8th grade math scores on Massachusetts MCAS exam for Kuss Middle School, Fall River, MA. Students in the Proficient and Advanced categories were 4% in 1998 and failed to rise above 8% by 2005.

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Every state's challenge: breaking the seemingly unbreakable connection between poverty and underperformance

California

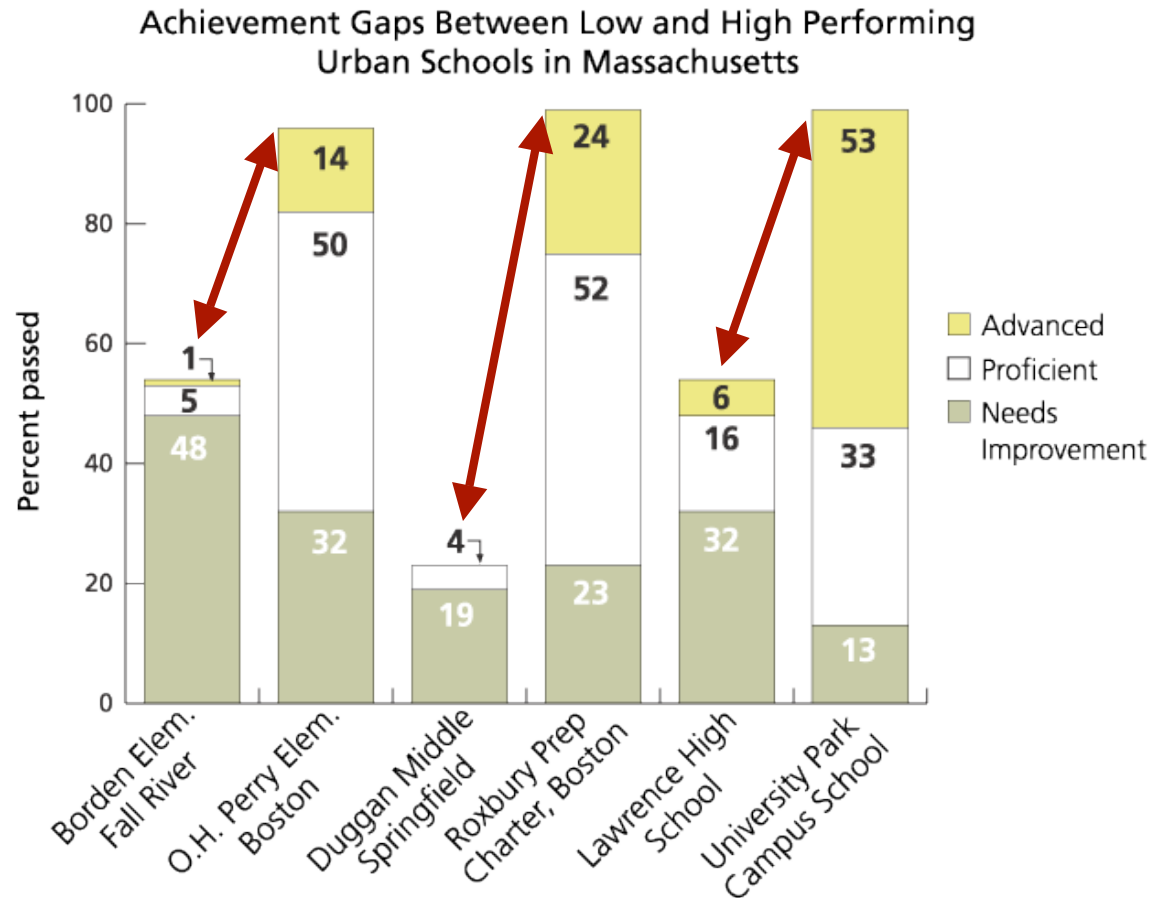% Proficient in Math

100
80
60
40
20
0

(n=1,829)

0   25   50   75   100

% of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

Higher-poverty schools

As poverty levels increase, achievement decreases

California 8th Grade Math Scores, 2006

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What makes it seem possible: some schools dramatically beat the odds

Achievement Gaps Between Low and High Performing Urban Schools in Massachusetts

Demographically similar urban schools. Source: 2003-06 MCAS data, MA DOE

2004 data
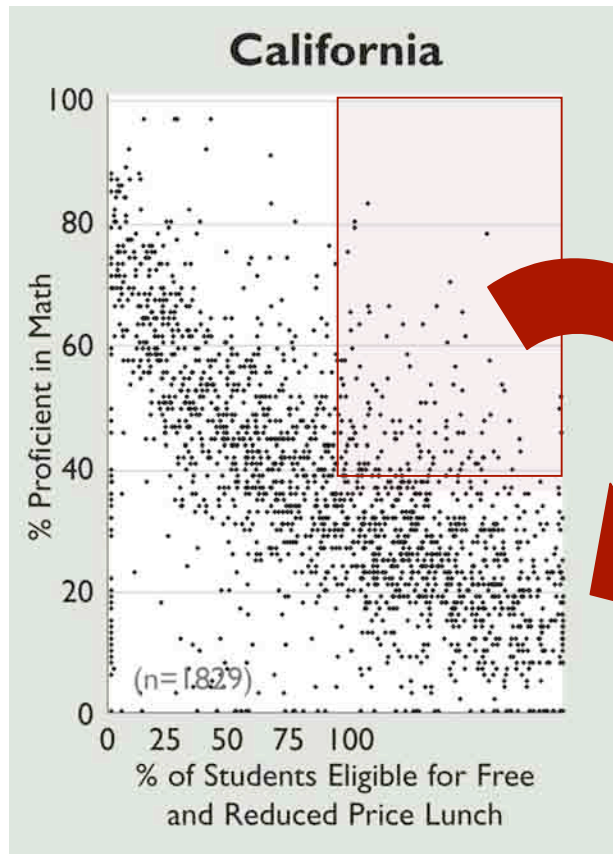
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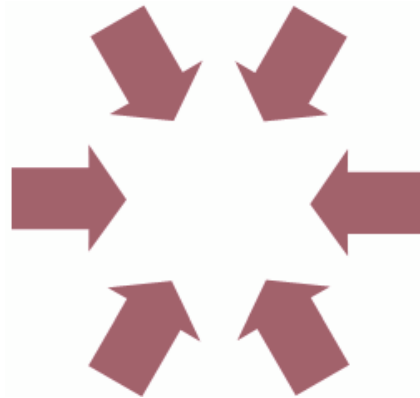
Task 1:
Learn from schools that are proving *it can be done…*

…and from reform strategies that are proving to be *conclusively inadequate*

The "What's Being Taught?" schooling model:
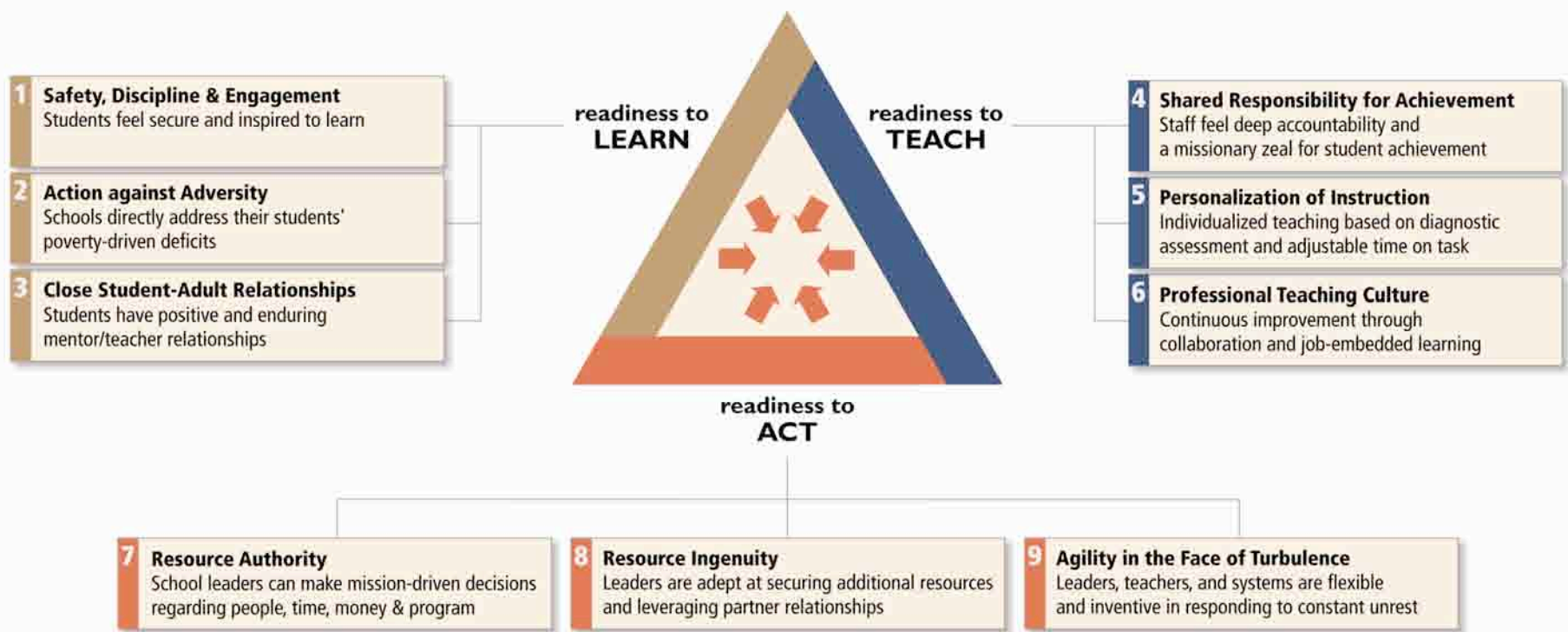## *keep up with the curricular conveyer belt*

➡ ➡ ➡ ➡ ➡

The "What's Being Learned?" schooling model in high-performing, high-poverty schools:
we commit to helping each of you succeed

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How do high-performing, high-poverty schools do it? They foster students' *readiness to learn*; focus staff's *readiness to teach*; and expand their *readiness to act*.

HPHP READINESS MODEL

readiness to
LEARN

readiness to
TEACH

1 **Safety, Discipline & Engagement**
Students feel secure and inspired to learn

2 **Action against Adversity**
Schools directly address their students' poverty-driven deficits

3 **Close Student-Adult Relationships**
Students have positive and enduring mentor/teacher relationships

4 **Shared Responsibility for Achievement**
Staff feel deep accountability and a missionary zeal for student achievement

5 **Personalization of Instruction**
Individualized teaching based on diagnostic assessment and adjustable time on task

6 **Professional Teaching Culture**
Continuous improvement through collaboration and job-embedded learning

readiness to
ACT

7 **Resource Authority**
School leaders can make mission-driven decisions regarding people, time, money & program

8 **Resource Ingenuity**
Leaders are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships

9 **Agility in the Face of Turbulence**
Leaders, teachers, and systems are flexible and inventive in responding to constant unrest

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Effective schools serving disadvantaged students show these characteristics:

A clear understanding of student needs:

- – Preparedness: skill levels of entering students
- – Relationships: from "us/them" and "my grade/your grade" to "we/all"
- – Relevance: making the learning incentive real
- – Environment: social support and community connectedness

Well-integrated strategies and the capacity to deliver them:

- – Rigor: higher-expectation curriculum linked to standards
- – Assessment: focusing on what's being *learned,* not *taught*
- – Differentiation: structured support tuned to student needs
- – Instructional capacity: professional culture of teaching & learning
- – Leadership capacity: team-based management of improvement

Conditions and incentives that support the work:

- – Freedom to act: authority over money, time, people, program
- – Professional HR norms & mission-driven incentives

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<u>What's Stopping You?</u>
Create a map of the design challenges in your way

Human capacity

– Adequacy of teacher workforce

– Adequacy of top and distributed team leadership

– Adequacy of outside support system

Operating conditions

– Freedom to act: authority over key resources (money, time, people, programming) to make mission- and data-driven decisions

– Freedom from unproductive or overlapping compliance burdens

– Incentives that drive adult (and student) behavior

Resources

– Adequacy of time for learning

– Adequacy of time for teacher planning, collaboration, PD

– Adequacy of resource support in general (class size, facilities, etc.)

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The challenge: virtually no high-performance work is being done in high-poverty settings *at scale*
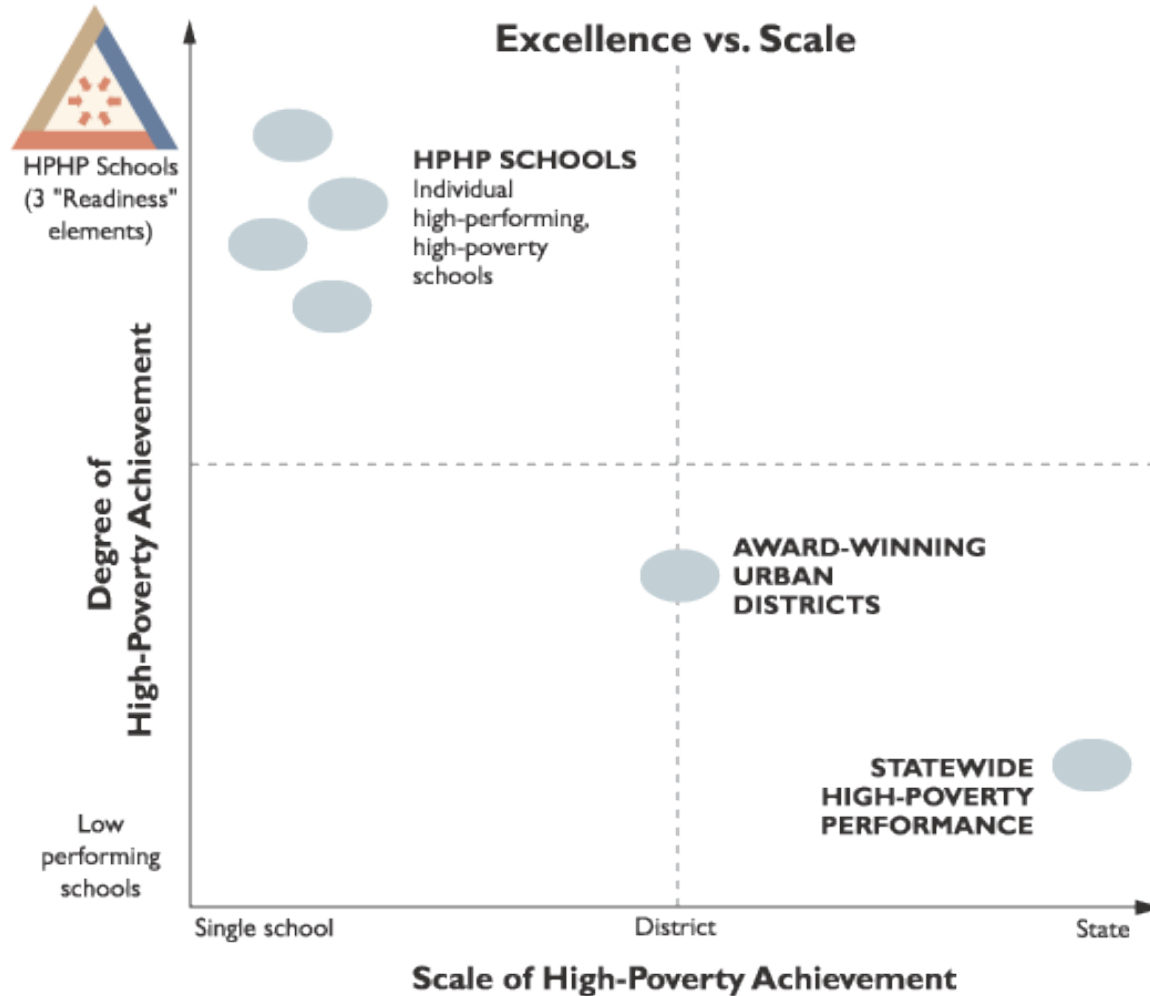
Instead: Most scaled-up reform has been limited to providing help for marginal *program change*
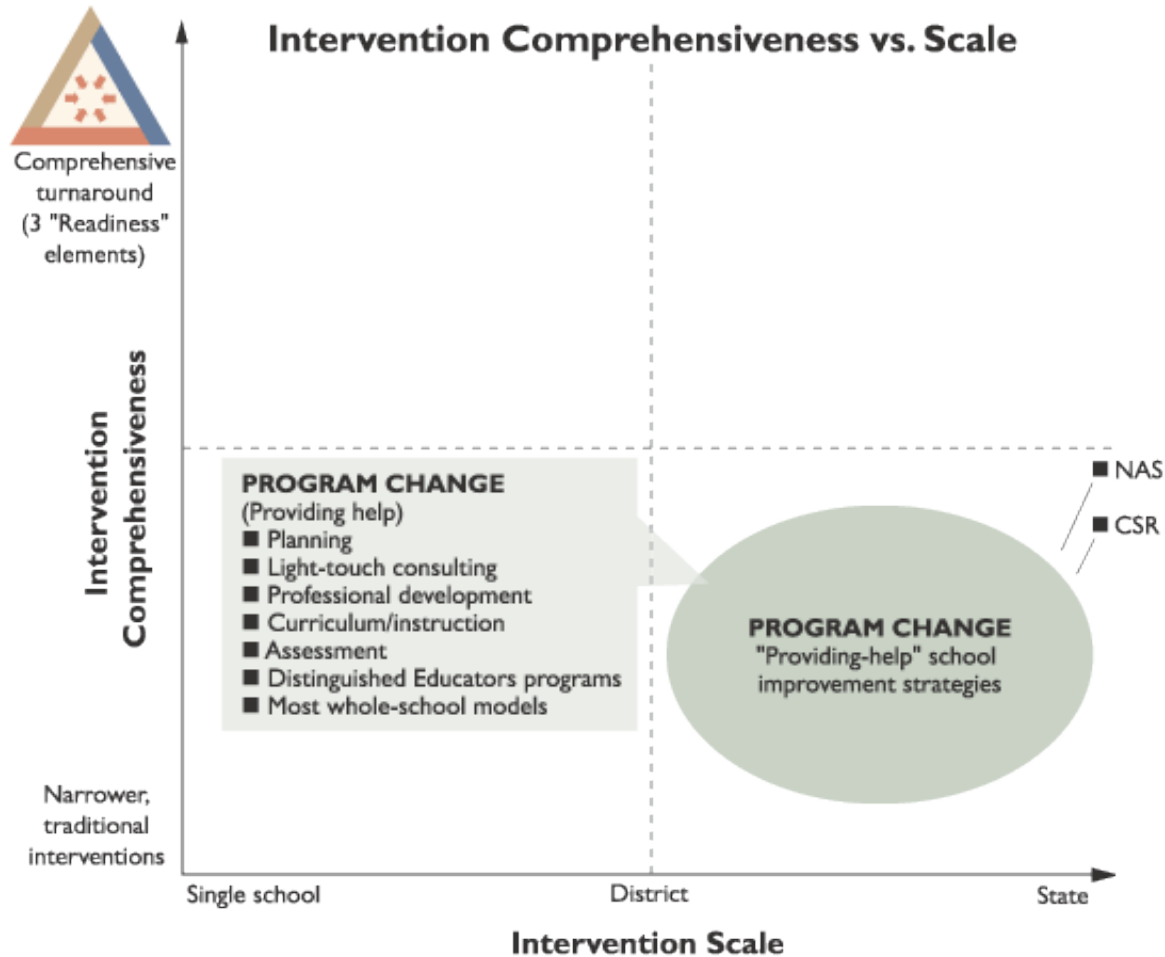
Some interventions have also focused on *changing people* as well as programming

Intervention Comprehensiveness vs. Scale
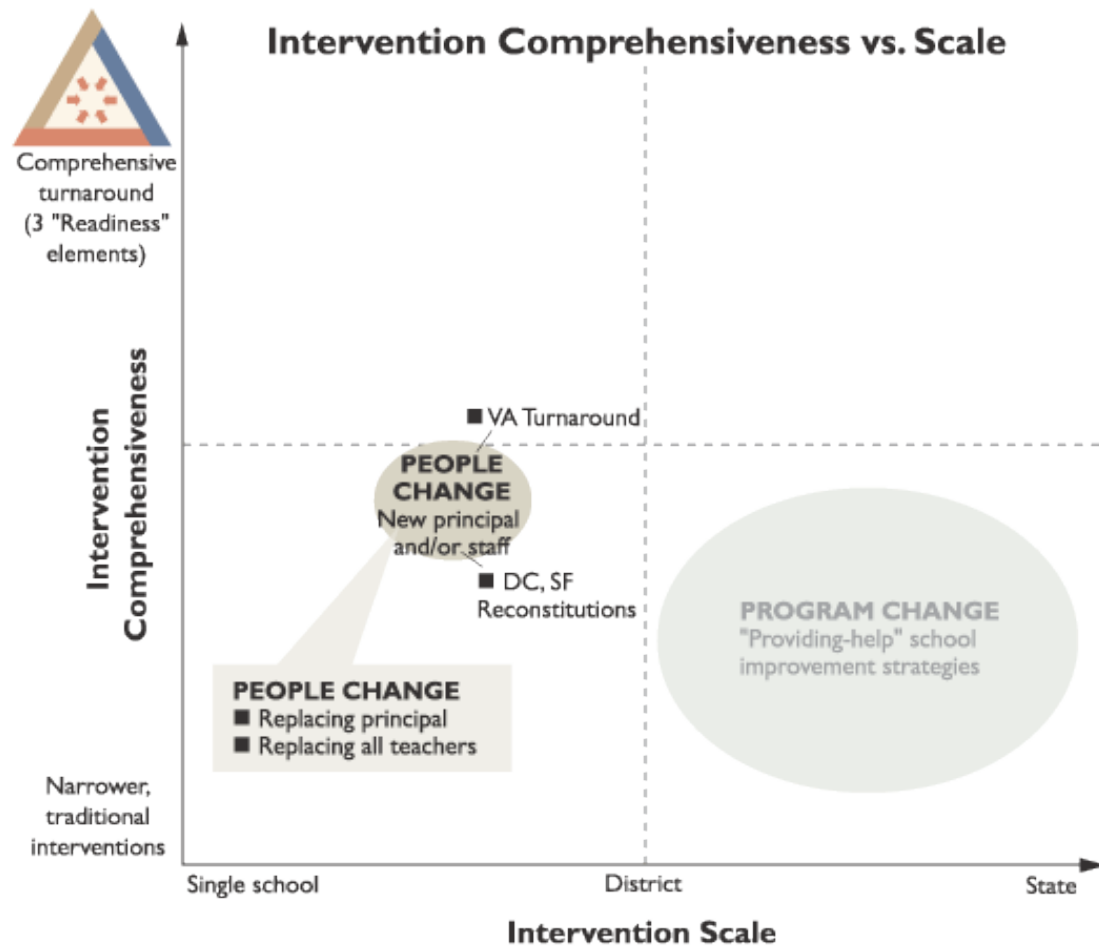
New experiments in some districts
are requiring *changes in operating conditions* as well

Intervention Comprehensiveness vs. Scale

Comprehensive turnaround (3 "Readiness" elements)

Intervention Comprehensiveness

PEOPLE CHANGE
New principal and/or staff

CONDITIONS CHANGE
New rules and incentives

■ Chicago, Phil. portfolios
■ NYC Empowerment Zone
■ Miami-Dade Improvement Zone

PROGRAM CHANGE
"Providing-help" school improvement strategies

CONDITIONS CHANGE
■ Authority over resources
■ Incentives linked to mission

Narrower, traditional interventions

Single school   District   State

Intervention Scale

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Where we should all be aiming: comprehensive, "new-world" turnaround that includes program, people, *and* conditions change

Intervention Comprehensiveness vs. Scale

Comprehensive turnaround (3 "Readiness" elements)

HPHP SCHOOLS
Individual high-performing, high-poverty schools

NEW WORLD TURNAROUND
Comprehensive system redesign

PROGRAM PEOPLE CONDITIONS

Narrower, traditional interventions

Intervention Comprehensiveness

Single school — District — State

Intervention Scale

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Task 2:
Probe the root causes behind the failure of our current intervention strategies

Why has so little fundamental change occurred in failing schools to date?

- **Lack of leverage:** No real help from NCLB; incremental reforms remain the common choice

- **Lack of capacity:** In state agencies, districts, schools, partners

- **Lack of exemplars:** No successful models at scale, no real consensus even on definitions

- **Lack of public will:** Failing schools have no constituency; hence, insufficient funding to date

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Understanding NCLB's options…

Increasing comprehensiveness of change ➡

CONDITIONS CHANGE

Research found Conditions Change to be a crucial element for effective turnaround

GOVERNANCE CHANGE

MANAGEMENT CHANGE

PEOPLE CHANGE

PROGRAM CHANGE

Revision	Reconstitution	Contract Management	State Management	Charter Conversion	
Theory: program needs improvement	Theory: staff is insufficiently skilled	Theory: change school management, along with program, people, conditions	Theory: state must assume control as district has abrogated its right to manage the school	Theory: best to circumvent entire system	Each option applies to schools retained and restructured, as well as schools closed and reopened.
NCLB OPTION 5	NCLB OPTION 2	NCLB OPTION 3	NCLB OPTION 4	NCLB OPTION 1	

Same School   New Start

Although these are two of NCLB's restructuring options, our research shows they are insufficient to produce effective turnaround.

… and the choices being made in the field

Increasing comprehensiveness of change ➡

Research found Conditions Change to be a crucial element for effective turnaround

CONDITIONS CHANGE

GOVERNANCE CHANGE

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Same School / New Start

CA: 0% MI: 0% CA: 0% MI: 2%

MI: 14%

CA: 20%

MI: 28%

Popularity of choice is inversely proportional to the comprehensiveness of change

CA: 61%

MI: 76%

CA: 93%

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%

Intervention Taxonomy #2

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These gaps have led to state strategies that are insufficient to meet the challenge:

Insufficient incentives for educators to choose major change

- Too few *positive incentives*: reasons to opt into real transformation
- No *negative incentives*: unattractive consequences for inaction
- Lack of aggressive, clear performance targets

Insufficient comprehensiveness, intensity, and sustainability

- No state engagement in changing *conditions* – rules for adults
- No overall "people strategy" – developing *capacity* for turnaround
- No school *clustering*: limits effectiveness and scale
- All "loose," no "tight": e.g., more systematic on curriculum, PD
- Limited partner support: "light touch," small scale, fragmented
- Limited district connection to school improvement effort

Insufficient commitment from the state

- Lack of high-visibility public and private sector commitment
- SEA lacks sufficient flexibility, authority, resources

And the challenge is upon us:
nearly 5,000 schools in "Restructuring" by 2010

FIGURE 1B Nearly 5,000 Schools Are Projected to Be in Restructuring by 2010
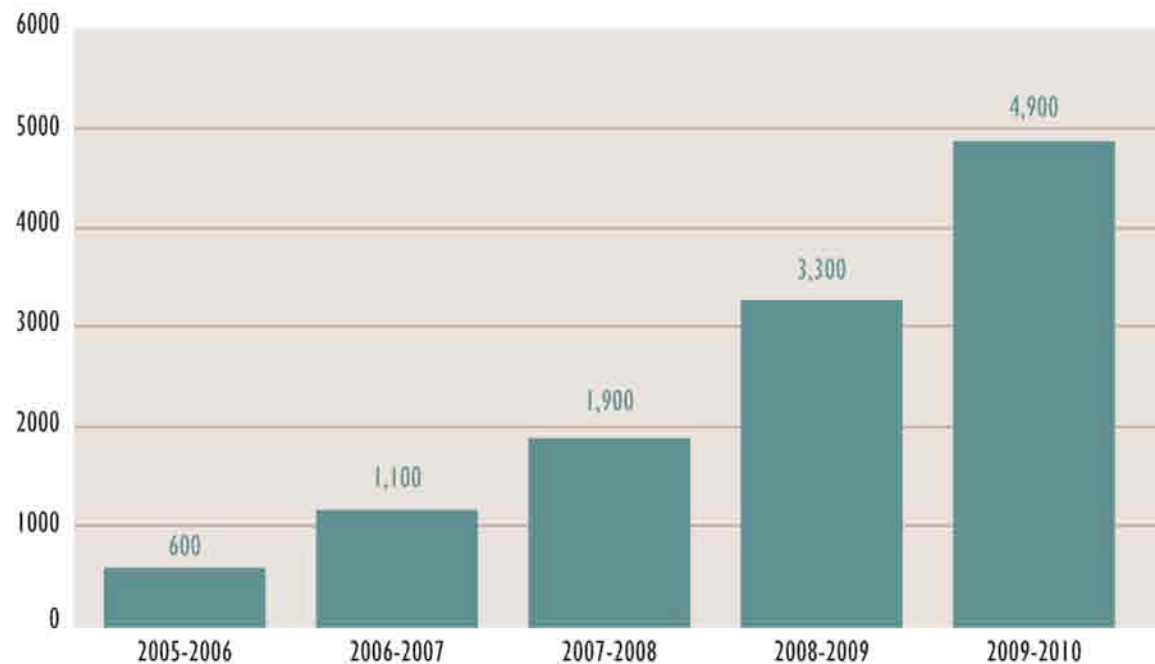
Projections are based on actual 2005-2006 data for schools in Restructuring Status under NCLB with the assumption that the rate of schools leaving that status will remain constant over the next four years. Source of 2005-06 data: Center on Education Policy (2006).

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Task 3:
Operationalizing the Readiness Triangle

**Drawing from all of this analysis –
identify the non-negotiables
for effective turnaround
of failing schools at scale**
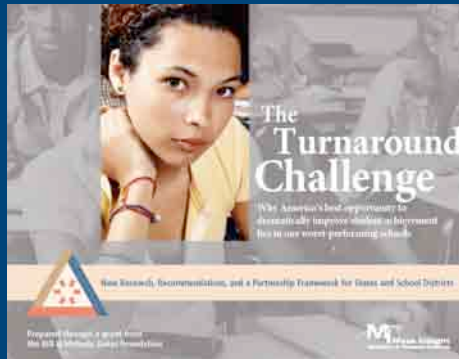
The 3 'C's of a comprehensive, coherent state turnaround initiative

1 **Conditions**   Change the rules and incentives governing people, time, money, & program

2 **Capacity**   Build turnaround resources & human capacity in schools and lead partners

3 **Clustering**   Organize in clusters by region, need, or type -- where new conditions apply and states/districts create special capacity

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INSIDE THE DISTRICT

OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT

Traditional in-district
operating conditions

Increasingly flexible
operating conditions

Charters

LOCAL
TURNAROUND
ZONE

with charter-like authority

PEOPLE
More authority over hiring,
placement, compensation,
and work rules

TIME
More scheduling authority;
longer day, longer year

MONEY
More budget flexibility,
more resources

PROGRAM
More flexibility to shape
program to students' needs
and turnaround priorities

Conditions Change:
Outside-the-system
approaches, applied
***inside* the system**

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Key elements in turnaround zones, triggered by the conditions changes:

- **More time:** for student learning and teacher collaboration

- **More flexibility to shape school staff and lead the turnaround:** for principals and school leadership teams

- **More pay and professional incentives:** for teachers and administrators

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Where conditions change is entering state policy: Florida's use of financial sanctions for leverage

- 26 state-imposed requirements for repeat "F" schools include requiring all teachers to reapply for their jobs, differential pay, reallocation of effective teachers and leaders

- By 2006-7, state had taken action against seven LEAs with chronic "F" schools

- For two in continued non-compliance, state withheld equivalent of superintendent's salary

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Where conditions change is entering state policy: Massachusetts' first two of ten required conditions for school turnaround

- The school's principal has authority to select and assign staff to positions in the school without regard to seniority.

- The school's principal has control over financial resources necessary to successfully implement the school improvement plan

Passed by the Massachusetts State Board of Education, October 2006

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The pistol and the handshake:
Massachusetts' Commonwealth Pilot initiative

- State offers a choice: an "ultimate consequence" or opting into conditions change

- Model built on existing contract language that created Boston's Pilot schools (in-district charters)

- Flaw: insufficient recognition of the difference between new-start Pilots and turnaround Co-Pilots – *much* more intensive cluster/partner support required

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Capacity-Building/Internal (school leadership): Improving turnaround skills among school leaders

A state effort to recruit and train school leaders who can:

- Concentrate on a few changes with big, fast payoffs
- Implement proven practices first; ask forgiveness later
- Communicate a clear, positive vision
- Collect, personally analyze, use data well
- Enlist key influencers to support major change
- Build culture of disclosure in open-air meetings
- Require all staff to adopt changes – not optional
- Act in relentless pursuit of goals, touting progress only as a passing way-station

Adapted from Kowal and Hassel, *Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff,* Learning Point Associates, 2005,

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Capacity-Building/External:
Addressing the "projectitis" afflicting school reform
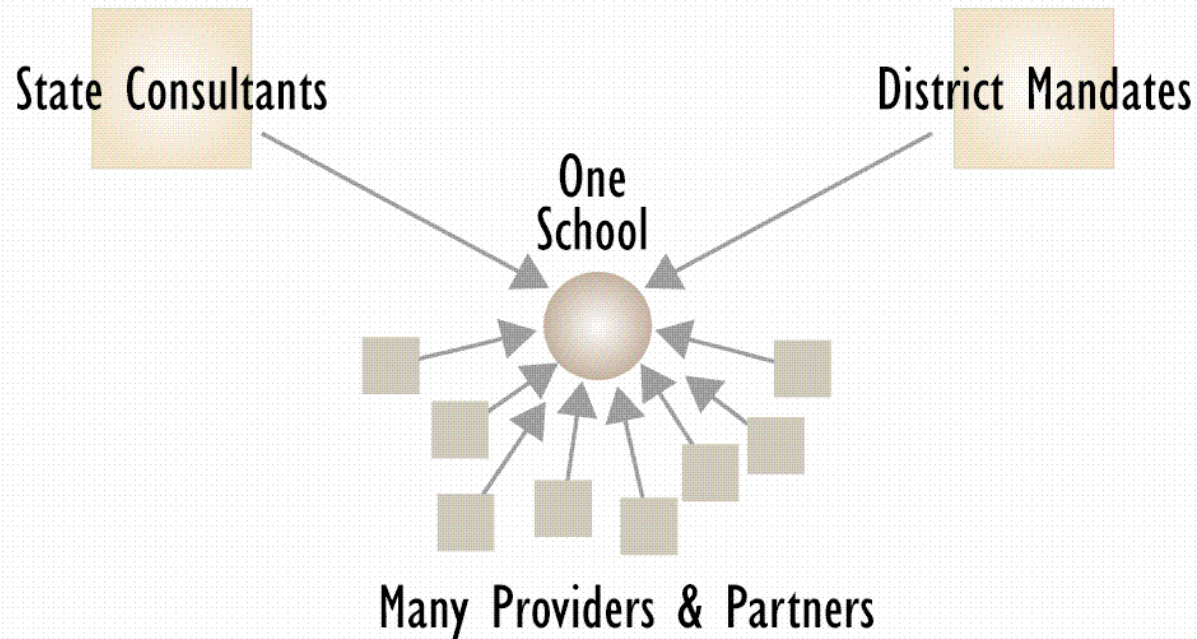
A new model: deeply embedded lead turnaround partners, integrating the work of other providers

"New World" Capacity & Roles within a Comprehensive Turnaround Framework
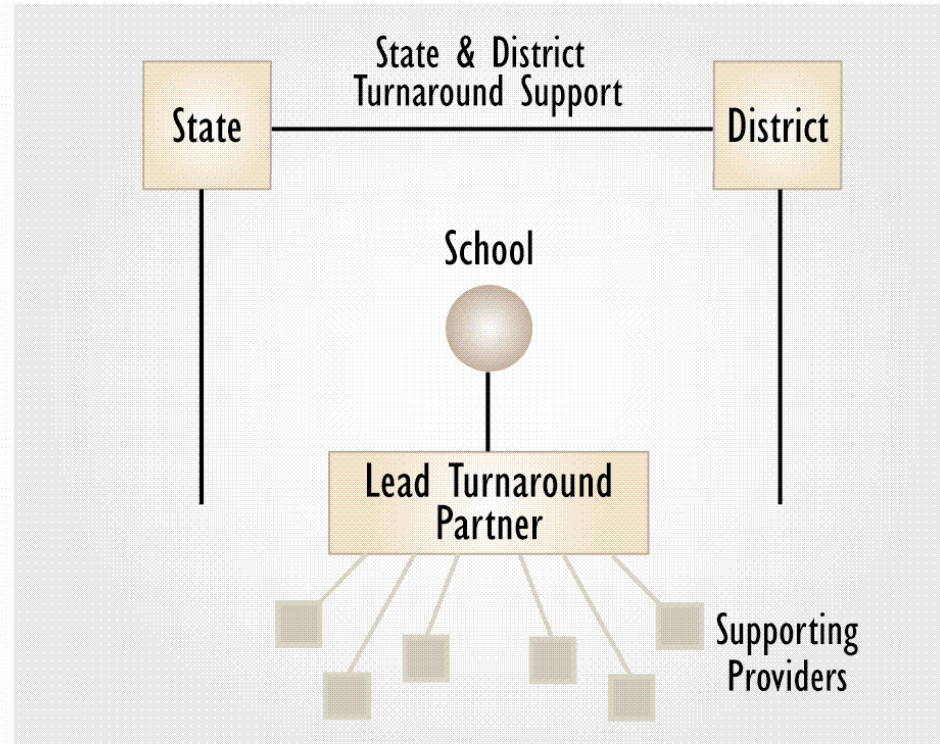
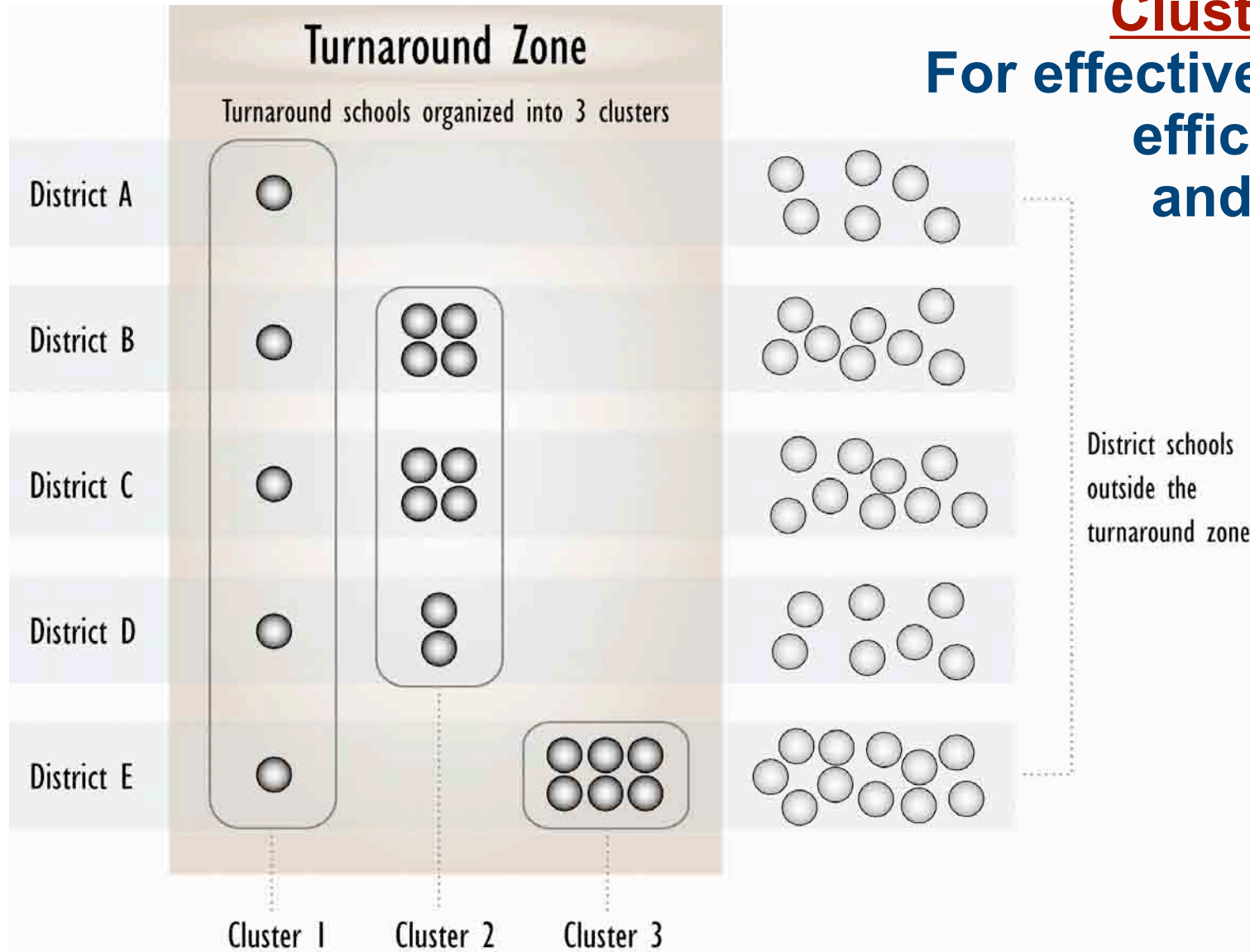# Building Capacity: Current Partner Roles

Partner Landscape

Comprehensive Partners		"Point Solution" Partners		
SMOs	**RSOs**	**School Support Organizations (SSOs)**		
School Management Organizations	**Reform Support Organizations**	**Curriculum, Academic Support, and Intervention**	**Student and Community Support**	**Functional Support**
• CMOs, EMOs, or other partners with charter-like authority that manage existing or replacement turnaround schools • Significant control over implementation of the model, conditions, and operation of the school(s) • Held accountable for results	• Technical assistance partner with a more comprehensive approach working closely with districts and individual schools • Given some authority based on "non-negotiables" specified by their model • Accountability for results either shared or remains entirely with district	• Partner creates methodology around: - Content / curriculum - Assessment - Professional Development • Little-to-no accountability for outcomes	• Partner supports school(s) and students by providing wraparound services including: - Student support services (e.g., guidance, behavioral counseling, etc.) - Help engaging parents and the community • Little-to-no accountability for outcomes	• Partner responsible for implementing systems for streamlining efficiency in district(s) and school(s) including: - Information technology - Human resources and hiring support - Finance (budgeting, finance, payroll)

Districts, not states, are taking the lead in developing a base of turnaround partners

- Chicago: University of Chicago, AUSL, Chicago RISE

- New York City: Partnership Support Organizations (PSOs)

- Philadelphia: Mastery Schools

A portfolio strategy with a mix of SMOs, charters, and RSO/lead turnaround partners

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Clustering:
For effectiveness, efficiency, and scale

Turnaround Zone

Turnaround schools organized into 3 clusters

District A

District B

District C

District D

District E

District schools outside the turnaround zones

Cluster 1   Cluster 2   Cluster 3

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Task 4:
Apply the non-negotiable strategies within a new, comprehensive set of structures and supports

A Partnership Framework for School Turnaround

THE WAY FORWARD
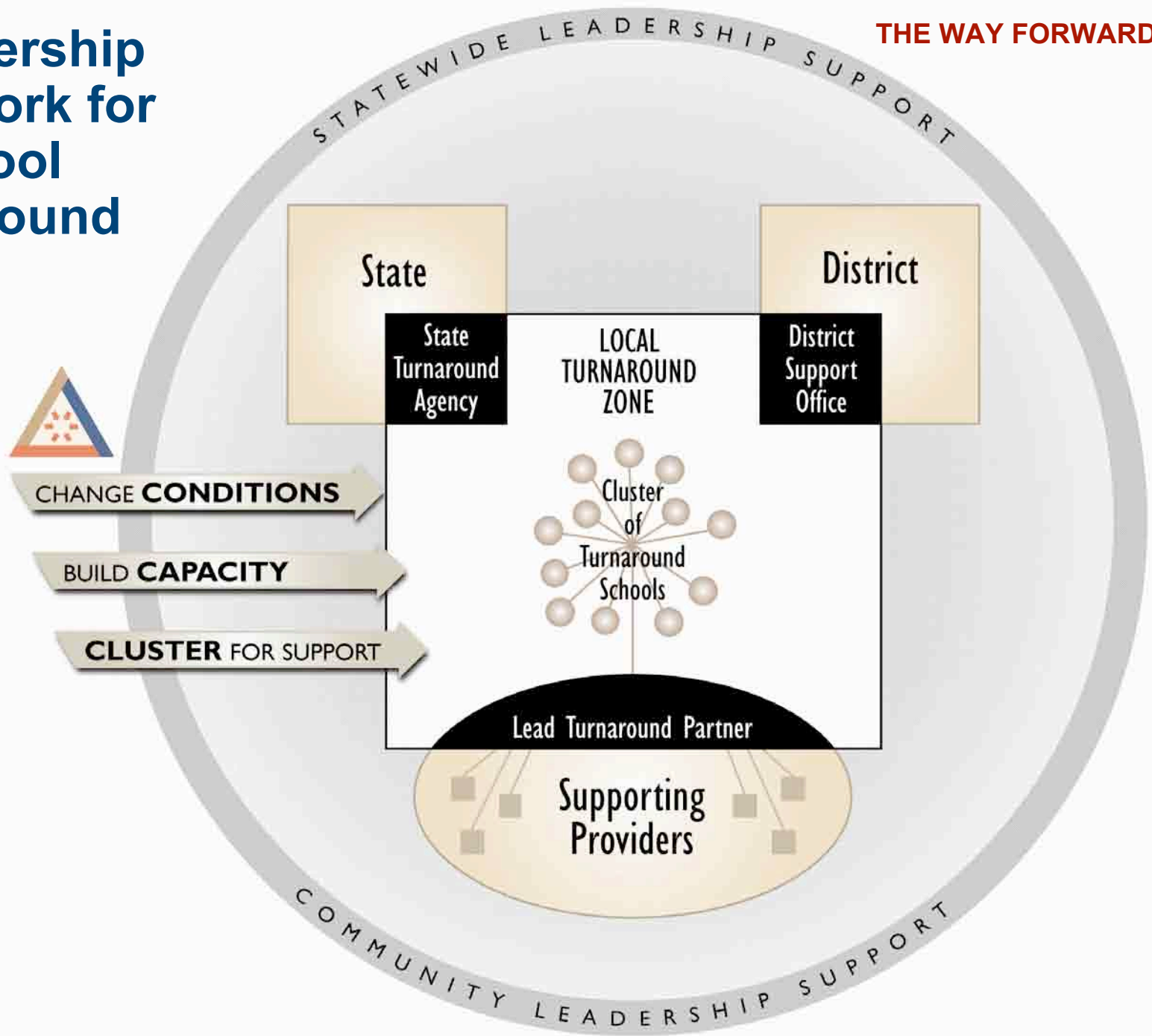
Some states and districts are creating new structures to manage turnaround

- Maryland: The Breakthrough Center
- Alabama: The Accountability Roundtable
- New York State: $6 million initiative with McKinsey, EducationCounsel to restructure the SEA
- New York City and Chicago: new district offices to manage turnaround and new-school development

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The vision for turnaround:
Five steps towards a new state
# and local partnership

- **Create protected space and an attractive choice for fundamental change** through school turnaround zones and special collective bargaining/contractual agreements

- **Focus resources on cohorts** (e.g., 25 per year in three to five regional clusters) to produce success

- **Internal capacity:** Create a recruiting and developing effort for teachers, leadership teams in partnership with higher education, districts; make these efforts "clubs good educators *want* to join"

- **External capacity – lead turnaround partners:** Create coherent, integrated support for school clusters by building state-based turnaround partner organizations

- **Create or anoint an entrepreneurial agency**, **with leverage and resources,** to establish the partnerships, integrate state initiatives, and lead the turnaround effort

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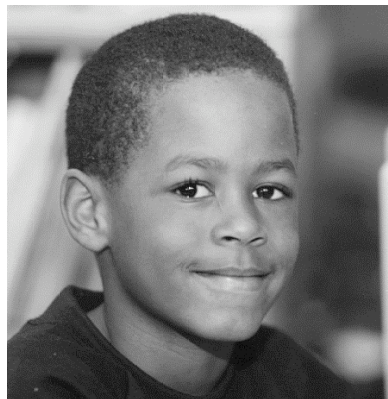
"Instead of helping some kids beat the odds…

…why don't we just change the odds?

Geoffrey Canada, Founder, Harlem Children's Zone, 2004

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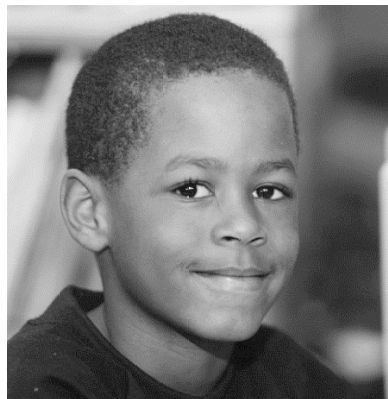
**For more information and resources
on school turnaround:**

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