Lessons Learned in Massachusetts High School Turnaround

A Resource for High School Leaders

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Executive Summary

As part of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE's) ongoing commitment to improve supports provided to all schools, and the lowest performing schools in particular, American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of how low-performing (Level 3 and 4) high schools use School Redesign Grants (SRGs) and other supports to catalyze improvement. This study is a direct follow-up to the 2016 Evaluation of Level 4 School Turnaround Efforts, which showed that SRGs have a smaller impact on high school student achievement than on elementary and middle school achievement. In addition, ESE noted that since 2010, only one high school has exited Level 4 status. To address the challenge of successfully turning around high schools, ESE created a cross-agency team to more deeply examine what works in turnaround at the high school level in Massachusetts while also joining national networks with other states focused on high school turnaround. As a part of ESE-commissioned research to build on these efforts, this report summarizes findings from AIR's qualitative analyses of turnaround practices that appear challenging for low-performing high schools, as well as promising practices used by improving and higher performing high schools in the state.

Previous ESE efforts focused on understanding school turnaround in Massachusetts revealed that successful turnaround schools generally implement four key practices:

- Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, Collaboration, and Professional Responsibility
- Turnaround Practice 2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction for All Students
- Turnaround Practice 3. Student-Specific Supports and Interventions
- Turnaround Practice 4. School Climate and Culture

But how should a school prioritize its turnaround efforts within and across all four broad areas, particularly at the high school level? This evaluation attempted to answer that question by identifying specific strategies or activities that distinguish high schools that have been able to improve student outcomes from high schools still struggling to do so.

The study relied heavily on interview and focus group data collected as part of ESE's school monitoring processes. These data included school-level ratings for turnaround practice implementation, which enabled the study team to focus analyses on turnaround high schools with high and low implementation ratings.

Schools in this report may be categorized in one or two of four overlapping groups. The first group is turnaround schools, which refers to Level 3 and Level 4 high schools that received Monitoring Site Visits (MSVs) as part of ESE's monitoring processes. Within turnaround schools, they are grouped by those that are struggling, schools not yet showing clear evidence of improvement, and those that are improving (i.e., schools that are showing signs of progress but

that have not yet exited turnaround status). The final group represents higher performing high schools, which are Level 1 schools with similar student populations to many high schools in turnaround status.

Evidence from a review of the MSV data from all Level 3 and Level 4 high schools indicates that schools often found the same areas the most challenging. This report, produced after AIR researchers visited both higher performing high schools as well as turnaround schools, highlights promising practices that higher performing high schools and improving turnaround high schools implement along with lessons learned that could provide effective solutions to these challenges wherever possible.

Seven essential areas of turnaround work are challenging for current turnaround high schools, which are evidenced by earning the lowest ratings during their MSVs ("limited evidence" or "developing"). This report will examine each area in more detail:

- Creating a culture of open, two-way communication (Turnaround Practice 1)

- Implementing an instructional schedule that meets both student and teacher needs (Turnaround Practice 2)

- Providing adequate and appropriate teacher training to identify and address students' academic and nonacademic needs (Turnaround Practice 3)

- Using collaborative systems for identifying student academic needs (Turnaround Practice 2)

- Consistent implementation of well-defined, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to address student needs (Turnaround Practice 3)

- Consistent implementation of a schoolwide student behavior plan (Turnaround Practice 4)

- Consistent implementation of a cohesive system of wraparound supports (Turnaround Practice 4)

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to turnaround. However, this research advances the important work of building a shared understanding of what it often takes to turn around a low-performing high school. In sharing this information, we hope to contribute to the ability of high schools to focus on strategies most likely to impact student outcomes, as evidenced by other schools facing similar challenges. ESE also will continue to refine its approach to supporting the lowest performing high schools in the state, thus laying the groundwork for all schools to succeed.

Introduction

As part of ESE's ongoing commitment to improve supports provided to all schools, and the lowest performing schools in particular, AIR conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of how Level 4 schools[1] use federal School Improvement Grants (called SRGs in Massachusetts). This evaluation also examined the autonomies granted under state turnaround laws to catalyze improvement and how SRGs, specifically, impact student achievement in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.[2]

The prior study of the impact of SRGs on schools in Massachusetts, using a comparative interrupted time series (CITS) design, showed that SRGs have a significant impact on overall student performance in both ELA and mathematics, as measured on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), 1, 2, and 3 years after receipt, with increases in the effect size each year (Figure 1).

Figure 1. ELA and Mathematics Achievement Score Effect Sizes by Year After Implementation
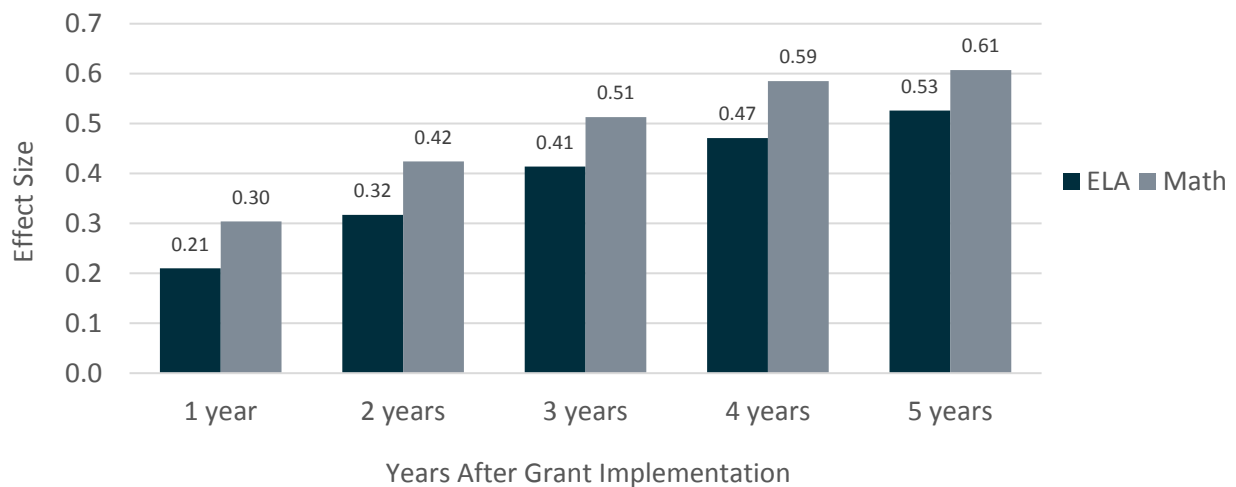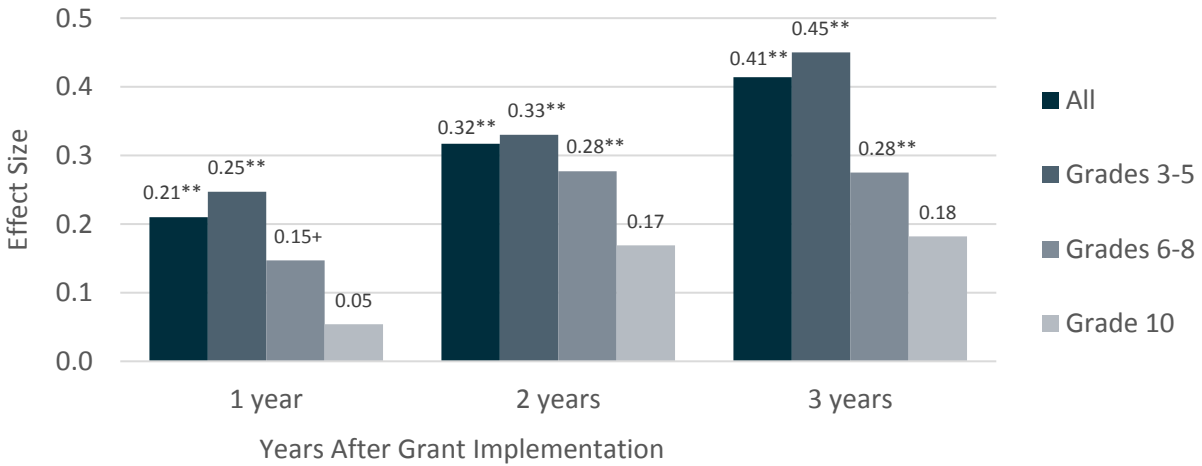

Note. All estimates are statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

The impact of SRGs on student achievement in ELA, however, seems to be driven by improvements in Grades 3–8, where the effect size is statistically significant 1, 2, and 3 years after grant receipt; the effect size at Grade 10 is not statistically significant 1, 2, or 3 years after grant receipt (Figure 2).

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[1] The lowest performing schools in Massachusetts (excluding Level 5 schools) that have been placed into receivership.

[2] The full 2016 report on implementation is available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2016/09L4TurnaroundImplementation.pdf; and the full 2016 report on impact is available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2016/09L4TurnaroundImpact.pdf.

Figure 2. ELA Achievement Score Effect Sizes by Grades and Year After Implementation

The estimate is statistically significant at the 10% level (+) and the 1% level (**).

The impact of SRGs on student achievement in mathematics is statistically significant at all grades, but the effect size for Grade 10 is smaller than for Grades 3–5 (Figure 3). Grades 6–8 have smaller effect sizes than Grade 10 in Years 1 and 2, but see increasing effects each year and surpass those for Grade 10 in Year 3.

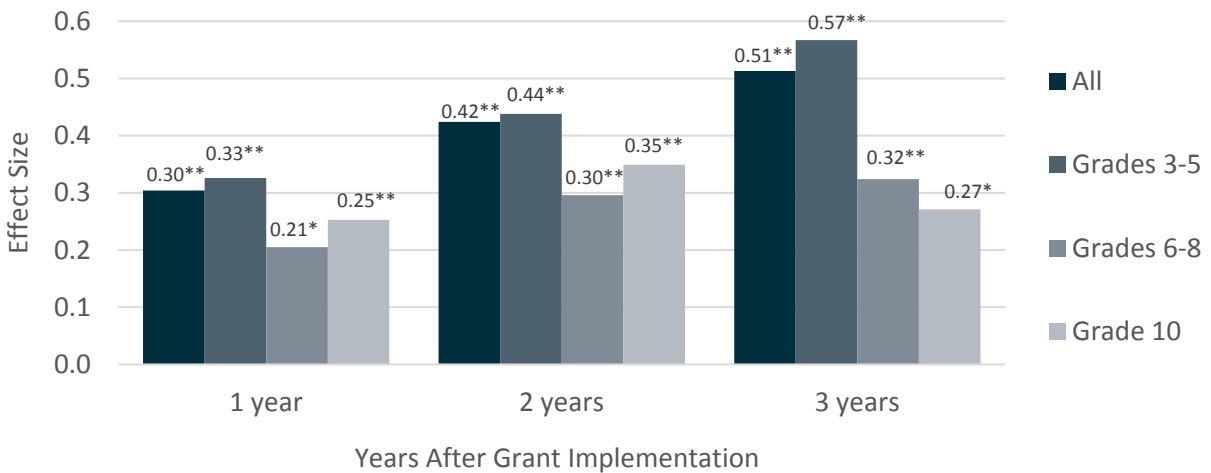**Figure 3. Mathematics Achievement Score Effect Sizes by Grades and Year After Implementation**

The estimate is statistically significant at the 5% level (*) and the 1% level (**).

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the impact of SRGs on high school student performance in ELA and mathematics is substantially smaller than for students in either elementary or middle school by Year 3. Furthermore, since ESE began categorizing schools by accountability and assistance level in 2010,[3] only one high school has successfully exited Level 4 status, whereas more than 20 elementary and middle schools have exited. As a direct follow-up to findings from the SRG impact evaluation, ESE commissioned AIR to conduct a follow-up study to identify specific strategies or activities that distinguish low-performing (Level 3 and 4) high schools that have been able to improve student outcomes from high schools still struggling to do so. In addition, AIR visited three higher performing high schools (Level 1) with similar student populations to many turnaround high schools to learn about their strategies in each area.

Massachusetts' ESE School Turnaround Research

During the past several years, ESE, in collaboration with independent researchers, has conducted several studies related to improving supports provided to low-performing schools. This work culminated in a set of four key turnaround practices that are articulated further in the *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Indicators and Continuum* document. Since 2015, ESE has used the research-based indicators contained in the *Continuum* to monitor progress of its lowest-performing schools.[4] The four key turnaround practices are as follows:

1. Establish a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration.

2. Employ intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction.

3. Provide student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs.

4. Establish a climate and culture that provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the school's focus on increasing student achievement.[5]

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[3] All Massachusetts public schools are classified into Levels 1–5, based on absolute achievement, student growth, and improvement trends as measured by the MCAS. Level 1 represents the highest performing schools in need of the least support; Level 5 represents the lowest performing schools in need of the most support (and, in fact, to be placed under state control). Level 4 represents the state's most struggling schools not under state control. Three years after a school's initial designation as Level 4, the school becomes eligible to exit Level 4. Schools that have shown sufficient improvement by this time are designated Level 3, 2, or 1, depending on the level of improvement shown. Some schools remain Level 4, with ESE deeming those schools as needing additional time to show sufficient improvement but on the right track; these schools' accountability level is reassessed each year that follows.

[4] See American Institutes for Research and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2015, September). *Massachusetts monitoring site visits turnaround practices indicators and continuum.* Retrieved from http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/monitor-site-visits-turnaround-indicators.pdf.

[5] See Lane, B., Unger, C., & Souvanna, P. (2014). *Turnaround practices in action: A three-year analysis of school and district practices, systems, policies, and use of resources contributing to successful turnaround efforts in Massachusetts Level 4 schools.* Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/practices-report-2014.pdf.

The current work, commissioned by ESE, builds on previous efforts to understand how low-performing schools, in general, use SRGs and other supports to catalyze rapid improvement. The work aligns with ESE's commitment to improve experiences and outcomes for high school students specifically and extends previous efforts in the following key ways:

- Identifies common challenges associated with implementing key turnaround practices in a high school setting

- Highlights specific promising strategies and illustrates the connections between these strategies and the key turnaround practices and indicators codified in the Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Indicators and Continuum document

- Specifies lessons learned from both the common challenges and promising practices to suggest ways in which struggling schools could implement strategies that may reduce their struggles

This report opens with a description of the mixed-methods approach used for the implementation study. We include information about the data sources used and the process for identifying the topic areas used to organize the key findings. Each finding aims to illustrate, by way of example, how specific strategies used by improving and higher performing schools and related strategies used by struggling schools differ, with an eye to unpacking variation in implementation that ultimately impacts a school's ability to make dramatic improvements in student achievement. Each finding also presents common challenges that schools face and examples of how improving schools overcome those challenges. The report concludes with suggestions for future research. Where relevant, the cross-practice themes identified in the *2016 Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Field Guide* are referenced. These themes characterize successful turnaround schools.

Methodology

To better understand the implementation of SRGs across high schools and potential explanations for variation in impact, the AIR study team analyzed existing interview and focus group data collected as part of ESE's annual MSVs. These data are summarized in yearly MSV reports that include numerical ratings that quantify the school's progress toward coherent implementation of the four turnaround practices (and related indicators). The sample included 22 reports from 13 schools across 3 years. Schools visited multiple times contributed multiple reports (e.g., School A 2014–15 MSV and School A 2015–16 MSV).

For this evaluation, the study team focused primarily on high schools receiving an MSV since 2015, most of which are Level 4 schools and current SRG recipients.[6] This decision was driven primarily by the fact that, for these schools, we already had rich interview and focus group data, from a wide range of stakeholders, about school turnaround efforts and baseline measures of implementation. The *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Indicators and Continuum* was used to rate each school on its implementation progress, and evidence to support each school's ratings was described in each school's report.[7] The 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 MSV reports served as the primary data sources for understanding what challenges high schools face and what effective implementation of turnaround practices looks like in authentic—and varied—high school contexts. We identify common challenges and potentially effective turnaround strategies, but, given the methodology, we cannot draw any causal relationships between specific strategies and improvement.

We also collected data from three higher performing high schools that are not monitored by ESE (i.e., do not receive an MSV) to supplement examples of promising practices.

Monitoring Site Visit Reports

In preparation for the initial 2014–15 MSVs, AIR and ESE worked together to identify specific indicators related to each turnaround practice area and define implementation of each indicator across a continuum. Although the indicators related to each turnaround practice area do not represent the full range of activities or strategies that a school may be employing in support of the turnaround practice, they do represent measurable, research-based strategies that have been observed in Level 4 and 5 schools that have realized rapid improvements in student outcomes.

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[6] For the previous CITS analyses, we limited our sample to Level 4 SRG recipients to better understand the impact of the treatment (SRG receipt) on school improvement for schools experiencing comparable student achievement outcomes.

[7] To inform the annual MSV reports, AIR interviewed a wide range of stakeholders from each school, including school leaders, teachers, English language learner specialists and special educators, leadership team members, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, nurses and guidance counselors, external support providers, and students. In addition, AIR interviewed the district liaisons to each school. The protocols used focused on learning more about the specific ways in which the school was making progress related to each key turnaround practice area.

MSV teams from AIR collected interview and focus group data from a wide range of district- and school-level stakeholders during the 2014–15 MSVs and each subsequent year. Together with classroom observations, these data contributed to the resulting annual MSV reports submitted to ESE. All data collected through interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded to one or more practice area indicators. Data for each indicator were analyzed to determine the level of implementation for that indicator, from limited evidence to sustaining. See Table 1 for an example of one indicator: Use of Autonomy.

For example, at the sustaining level, "the organizational practices, structures, and processes" related to that indicator "are functioning effectively, and timely feedback systems are embedded to identify potential problems and challenges.… The practice is embedded into the school culture." In addition, a holistic rating of the level of implementation for each overall practice area, from limited evidence to coherent implementation, was determined based on data and ratings for each indicator within that area. In addition to individual indicator and overall practice area ratings, the 2014–15 annual MSV reports included specific evidence and examples to support each rating.

Table 1. Excerpt From *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum*

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration				
Indicator	**Limited Evidence**	**Developing**	**Providing**	**Sustaining**
Use of Autonomy	School leaders have little to no autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) to make decisions about key elements of the school, such as staffing and length of the school day.	School leaders have some autonomy to make decisions about key elements of the school (e.g., staffing, school schedule) but have not yet used this autonomy or are uncertain how best to use it.	School leaders have the autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) to make decisions about key elements of the school day and have begun to use this autonomy to make changes in the school.	School leaders use the autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) and authority to focus work on implementing their turnaround plan or other improvement efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

Higher Performing Site Visit Reports

Given the limited number of exited or improving Level 4 high schools, the study team conducted site visits to three higher performing high schools serving student populations similar to many turnaround high schools. ESE nominated the schools for inclusion based on performance as well as school size, location, and demographic composition and invited those schools to participate in elective higher performing site visits (HPSVs) to inform the study. AIR staff conducted HPSVs in these three schools the same way they are conducted in low-performing schools and developed site visit reports modeled after the MSV reports. Qualitative data from these visits, along with associated ratings of implementation, were used to supplement examples of promising strategies for high school turnaround from the sample of MSV schools.

Limitations

This research had two notable limitations, both related to data availability: the content of the extant MSV data and the size of the higher performing school sample.

Extant MSV Data

Given the richness of the available MSV data, which reflects a wide variety of stakeholder perspectives on the turnaround process, this MSV data served as the primary data source for these analyses. Relying on these data, however, has its limitations. Primarily, because the MSV data were collected before and apart from this project, it was not possible to customize questions or probes related to the findings that emerged here; thus, sometimes the level of detail desired does not exist in the data set available. In addition, the MSV tools, including interview and focus group protocols and implementation rubrics, were intentionally designed to be used across all grade levels and school types. As a result, some high-school specific practices may not be fully addressed in the MSV data or resulting reports.

Higher Performing School Sample

We recognized the importance of ensuring the specific turnaround strategies highlighted herein reflected strategies used by higher performing high schools serving similar populations of students. Identifying Level 1 high schools in Massachusetts with diverse, urban, high-need student populations and convincing these schools to participate in 2 days of data collection activities was challenging and limited us to a sample of only three such schools.

Data Analysis

We analyzed MSV reports from 13 high schools (10 of which are SRG schools) for the past 3 years (2014–15 through 2016–17) along with HPSVs from three schools. High schools in the sample are located across seven districts and represent SRG Cohorts 2–7. All MSV reports analyzed include numerical ratings of implementation along with rich qualitative evidence supporting the assigned ratings.

All MSV and HPSV reports were uploaded into NVivo, a computer program used for qualitative data analysis. AIR researchers then developed a codebook using the *Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum* as the framework for categorizing specific strategies and challenges related to each indicator. Researchers reviewed each document and sorted the text into one or more of these coding categories.

We focused our qualitative analyses on those turnaround practice indicators with which high schools most commonly struggled, as evidenced by frequent ratings of limited evidence or developing. To determine which indicators were frequently challenging, we calculated the number of times each indicator received a rating of 0 (limited evidence) or 1 (developing) and considered both the total number of reports receiving ratings of 0 or 1 as well as the number of unique schools receiving ratings of 0 or 1 (see Table 2). Only indicators with at least 12 total ratings of 0 or 1 were considered for inclusion. Of those, indicators with at least nine unique schools represented were selected for inclusion in the qualitative analyses. Indicator 3.6 was

not included, despite meeting the criteria for total and unique school ratings, because ESE had already committed resources to developing a separate brief focused on effective strategies for improving academic interventions for students with disabilities.

Throughout the analysis and identification of topic areas for inclusion in the final report, the research team shared emerging themes with ESE and discussed how these could influence further exploration of extant data and the collection of new data.

Table 2. Turnaround Practice Indicators Frequently Rated as Limited (0) or Developing (1)

Analysis Decision	Indicator	Total Ratings of 0 or 1	Unique School Ratings of 0 or 1
Include	**3.2 Teacher Training to Identify Student Needs (academic and nonacademic)**	20	11
	3.4 Multi-tiered Systems of Support (academic and nonacademic)	19	12
	4.1 Schoolwide Behavior Plan	18	11
	4.4 Wraparound Services and External Partners	15	11
	2.2 Instructional Schedule	13	11
	1.7 Communication with Staff	12	9
Consider Including	**2.3 Identifying and Addressing Student Academic Needs**	13	9
	3.6 Academic Interventions for Students With Disabilities	12	9
	3.1 General Academic Interventions and Enrichment	14	8
Do Not Include	1.8 Sustainability	11	10
	1.2 High Expectations and Positive Regard	11	9
	1.6 Time Use for Professional Development and Collaboration	11	9
	1.3 Vision/Theory of Action and Buy-In	11	8
	4.2 Adult-Student Relationships	11	8
	1.5 Trusting Relationships	10	8
	2.5 Student Assessment Data Use (for schoolwide decision making)	10	7
	2.6 Student Assessment Data Use (for classroom instruction)	9	8
	4.3 Expanded Learning	9	8
	2.1 Instructional Expectations	9	7
	3.3 Determining Schoolwide Student Supports (academic interventions and enrichment)	9	7
	1.4 Monitoring Implementation and School Progress	9	6
	2.7 Structures for Instructional Improvement	8	6
	3.5 Academic Interventions for English Language Learners	6	6
	4.5 Family and Community Engagement	6	5

Analysis Decision	Indicator	Total Ratings of 0 or 1	Unique School Ratings of 0 or 1
	1.1 Use of Autonomy	5	5
	2.4 Classroom Observation Data Use	5	5

Note. Indicators in boldface denote indicators ultimately included in analyses.

Three areas that emerged for this high school-specific focus were aligned with focus areas identified as part of the 2016 implementation study that examined turnaround in all grades. These three areas in common, represented in boldface in Table 3, are communication culture, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and schoolwide student behavior plan.

Table 3. Alignment of Turnaround Practices and Focus Areas, All Grades and High Schools

Turnaround Practice	Focus Area: All Grades	Focus Area: High Schools
1. Establishing a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility for all students, and professional collaboration	• Autonomy • **Communication Culture**	• **Communication Culture**
2. Employing intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction	• Instructional Foci and Expectations • Classroom Observation Feedback and Data Use	• Instructional Schedule • Identifying and Addressing Student Academic Needs
3. Providing student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs	• **MTSS** • Nonacademic Student Supports	• Teacher Training to Identify Student Needs • **MTSS**
4. Establishing a climate and culture that provides a safe, orderly and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the school's focus on increasing student achievement	• **Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan** • Expanded Learning Opportunities • Family Engagement	• **Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan** • Wraparound Services and External Partners

We delve more deeply into each topic in the high schools column in the Findings section that follows. Here we define the commonalities between struggling and improving or higher performing schools as well as detail the challenges and promising practices in each topic.

Findings

The findings are organized by topic area. Seven overarching areas emerged as the most challenging to address for turnaround high schools and serve as the organizing structure for the findings contained in this report:

- Creating open, two-way communication between administrators and staff

- Developing an instructional schedule that meets student and teacher needs

- Providing adequate and appropriate teacher training to identify and address students' academic and nonacademic needs

- Using collaborative systems for identifying student academic needs

- Implementing a well-defined MTSS to address student needs

- Implementing a consistent schoolwide student behavior plan

- Implementing a cohesive system of wraparound supports

All these topic areas relate to a turnaround indicator described in the *Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum.* The findings refer to interview and focus group data collected from staff in current Level 3 and 4 schools, both improving and struggling, who participated in MSVs between 2014–15 and 2016–17 and interview and focus group data collected from higher performing Level 1 high schools in spring 2017.

Communication With Staff

Instructional staff at most higher performing schools reported multiple opportunities to provide feedback and input on decision making. Similarly, administration in higher performing schools used several methods to disseminate information to staff about major initiatives. In contrast, staff at struggling high schools often reported informal structures for two-way communication, and staff were not consistently included in planning and leadership conversations.

Challenges

Overall, staff at struggling schools described continuing challenges regarding schoolwide communication. Notably, they described fewer opportunities to provide feedback on policy decisions and felt that when they did provide feedback, it was not followed up on consistently. One instructional staff member described the situation as follows:

> … a lot of times, there are these protocols, and things being rolled out, and so we have our all-staff meetings, and they say, "Okay, this is what we're gonna do," but there really isn't [an] avenue for us to give feedback and say, "Wait, we're the ones working with these students, and we think it'd be better if you did it this way."

At another struggling high school, staff feel that they were initially included in discussions, but once the year started, teacher feedback became less of a priority. As one teacher described,

> At the beginning, when we were in the planning phase, I had input, but since the school [year] started, it was more like we have to keep attention to the schoolwide goals [first] and then what the teachers want.

Strategies at both of these schools include regular, all-staff meetings and an informal, "open-door" policy with administration. However, neither school maintained a strong structure for teacher feedback or input into school policy. Some staff at a third struggling school also felt

uncomfortable providing feedback to administration on policy: "[W]e're afraid to voice our opinions on certain things because if we do, we're afraid of whether or not we'd be invited back to get a job next year."

Staff at both higher performing and struggling schools mentioned e-mail as a strategy for communication but also said that there is "e-mail overload." At a struggling school, staff said, "There's transparency, I think, in e-mails… [However,] I think we get a volume of e-mails that just gives me too much information." Similarly, instructional staff at a higher performing school said, "The communications that we get, we get lots of e-mails. I don't really think it's really effective." Ensuring that staff know what is happening means breaking through this overload to make sure that important information is noticed.

Promising Practices

Staff at higher performing high schools often commented that they felt the level of communication from leadership was adequate and "there's really a sense of a team approach to everything that they do." School staff members are encouraged to take part in planning committees and have numerous opportunities to provide feedback to leadership. Encouraging staff members to participate in addressing problems of practice at their school is illustrative of higher performing high schools' growth mindset, one of the cross-practice themes characteristic of successful turnaround schools. Staff at Brockton High School described one such committee as follows:

> The Restructuring Committee that meets on Saturdays, which is a team of teachers [and] administrators; they get together, and they brainstorm and they plan, and through that process, I think it creates a lot more buy-in than [being told], "We're doing this, this is what you have to do," because there are teachers that participate in that and contribute to that [decision].

Two improving turnaround schools also make sure to include teachers and other education staff in school planning. Staff at one improving school described the school's leadership team as composed of "a team of teachers, there's parents on it and paraprofessionals, and an administrator meets with them." The team meets biweekly to provide an open communication channel and address stakeholders' concerns. At another improving school, leaders said, "[The] ILT meeting is when we get together to calibrate because the teachers lead the work." Staff at these schools also meet regularly with administration as part of grade-level or department planning time. Each higher performing school, as well as some improving schools, implemented an annual staff survey to provide additional opportunities for staff feedback.

While staff at higher performing schools face the same challenge of e-mail overload as staff at struggling schools, to manage this issue, the leaders at New Mission High School employed a multipronged approach to disseminating information. According to the principal,

> I don't just send e-mails for things that are really important. I'll hand deliver a paper; I don't put things in people's mailboxes. Or we'll have a meeting with the lead people, and… I tell them, "You need to meet with folks around this."

Staff members at both New Mission High School and Brockton High School also meet regularly as a school, with whole-school meetings occurring each month and every 6 weeks, respectively. Administrators at Somerville High School send out a weekly, bullet-point memo for staff, highlighting important information for the coming week to ensure that those items do not get lost or buried in other e-mails.

Lessons Learned

- **Staff Inclusion in Decision Making.** Staff at both improving and higher performing schools emphasize the need to include staff in committees and decision making as a way to ensure staff buy-in and provide the opportunity for important feedback.

- **Multiple Forms of Communication.** Both higher performing and struggling schools struggle with providing information by e-mail. One way that all schools can address this issue is to ensure that important information is provided in multiple ways, such as in person, by e-mail, and on paper, and by sending out a weekly, bullet-point memo with the most important highlights for the week.

- **Consistency and Follow-Up.** In addition to including staff in planning and decision making, ensuring that a formal system is set up for providing feedback and maintaining communication about follow-up is important to maintaining staff involvement and buy-in. Surveys can provide an opportunity to gather input; however, these can be ineffective if staff do not feel that feedback has been heard or that any changes resulted from the survey findings.

Instructional Schedule

Staff at all schools noted that designing a schedule to meet all student and staff needs is an ongoing struggle, and that the schedule at several schools is impacted by staffing shortages. When asked about making changes to their instructional schedule, administrators at higher performing schools and some struggling schools explained that involving instructional staff in the planning process makes developing effective master schedules easier.

Challenges

Designing a schedule to meet all student needs is a major challenge at multiple struggling schools. Although not always or necessarily the case, at some schools, the transition from a block schedule to a seven-period schedule has disproportionately affected career pathways or enrichment programs, to the point at which students cannot achieve the credits mandated by the program guidelines. In other schools, the schedule interferes with the ability of special education staff to provide mandated services for individualized education programs (IEPs), in particular because of the separation of lower grade schedules from upper grades. According to one staff member, "We're getting more and more students [who] have gaps and that there's just not enough time in the day in the current schedule to meet the gaps of those students." Staff also felt that the schedule "needs flexibility"; a schedule that is too rigid often does not allow for students to "engage in deep learning [opportunities]" that may require additional time or scheduling flexibility.

Staff at both higher performing and struggling schools mentioned staffing difficulties when planning the school schedule. Multiple schools noted that they struggle to find staff to cover necessary school duties, such as hall monitoring and pullouts, while also providing staff with time for planning periods. Staffing also has affected how these schools provide intervention

support and electives for students. According to one staff member at a struggling school, this has greatly affected their intervention block because "[w]e have fewer staff than we had last year, so there are fewer places for kids to go." Staff at another struggling school lamented the lack of availability of their literacy coach, saying,

> [R]ight now she's doing the job of other people, and she's not able to actually do her literacy coach job fully. She used to be able to run lots of study groups, [but] now she doesn't have time to do that because she's doing the jobs other people should be doing.

In another school, special education staff are divided because lower grades have a different schedule; thus, these staff members cannot cover school duties in addition to providing pullout and push-in service and participating in-common planning time.

Many schools have had difficulty establishing both an appropriate period length and start time for students. Determining the period length requires juggling the need for intervention time, electives, and common planning time. At many schools, instructional staff feel that the tendency toward longer periods and block schedules is "developmentally inappropriate":

> [They] feel like our students fatigue. An hour and a half of work, especially when we're working with dense text and doing text analysis on argument writing, all this kind of work and students have just come from a calculus class.

On the other side of the spectrum, several schools also are struggling with shortened periods. Staff at one school described this change as follows:

> We didn't lengthen our school day, so that [intervention] time came from each period, and I think it's been difficult. That 5 minutes actually makes a difference, and I think that the length of a period should be 60 to 75 minutes. We're now at 49 minutes.

Although certainly not the only promising approach, schools included in this study found that implementing periods that are close to 60 minutes in length was more successful in allowing for project-based learning while reducing student fatigue, as well as for creating rotating five to six block periods. Staff also noticed students struggling with early start times, in particular when they need to travel long distances on public transportation to get to school.

Promising Practices

Higher performing and struggling schools found success when involving instructional staff in schedule development. A school leader emphasized the need for staff input as follows:

> If we were a traditional school, we would have to vote. I want to make it as close to that process as possible. I don't want just because we're a turnaround school for it to feel like a dictatorship.

Administrators at one struggling school conducted a student survey before finalizing the new schedule. Administrators at a Somerville High School created a schedule committee to make changes when they found that their schedule no longer met the needs of students. According to staff, the previous schedule interfered with internship opportunities for career and technical

education (CTE) students and did not build in enough time to meet the increasingly large gaps that students bring with them into high school. The school created a committee that included instructional staff to determine how to change the schedule to address these needs and made sure to elicit additional staff feedback as part of a survey. The current schedule aims to "lock" CTE time while other blocks rotate and to provide more time in the day for student supports. An improving school also made sure to involve staff in planning for the next school year by giving teachers the opportunity to provide feedback on the schedule during spring professional development.

Leadership at higher performing and improving schools also emphasized the importance of including common planning time in the master schedule, to allow for teacher collaboration and coordination efforts. Dedicating time for teachers to work together to align their instruction and instructional strategies, and thus prioritizing highly consistent, aligned, and rigorous instructional practices, is reflective of one of the cross-practice themes characteristic of successful turnaround schools. According to staff members at one improving school, "[School leaders] were able to make those changes where they got the majority of the core content area teachers off at the same time, which has been great." During planning, one struggling school brought in a consultant, who "got clear about what their priorities were in the scheduling process, and they included making sure that everybody had common planning time."

In addition to collaborative planning, two higher performing schools, New Mission High School and Brockton High School, implemented a coteaching model that partners special education staff with general education teachers during core subject classes with at least one student with an IEP. Although staffing is at times a struggle, teachers typically are highly supportive of this practice and feel that the coteaching model is "one reason [their] special ed[ucation] population is doing well."

Lessons Learned

- **Staff Inclusion in Schedule Development.** School leadership should work to include instructional staff when making decisions about the master schedule and provide opportunities for feedback. Schools found some success by including staff on scheduling committees and administering schoolwide surveys. Some schools also worked to include student voice in the schedule development process.

- **Time for Instruction.** Staff and students found schedules to be more successful when they were able to balance the need for adequate instructional time while also not overwhelming students with extended periods of inaction. Some schools found that 60-minute periods are less stressful for students while still allowing time for projects and in-depth analysis. Schools should ensure master schedules that allow for adequate intervention and enrichment periods to meet student needs.

- **Collaboration and Coordination of Staff.** Schools should ensure that adequate time is available for staff to plan and collaborate on lesson plans, including with special education instructors and interventionists. Students with IEPs also may benefit from schools implementing a coteaching model, which can provide a more cohesive structure than separate pullout sessions.
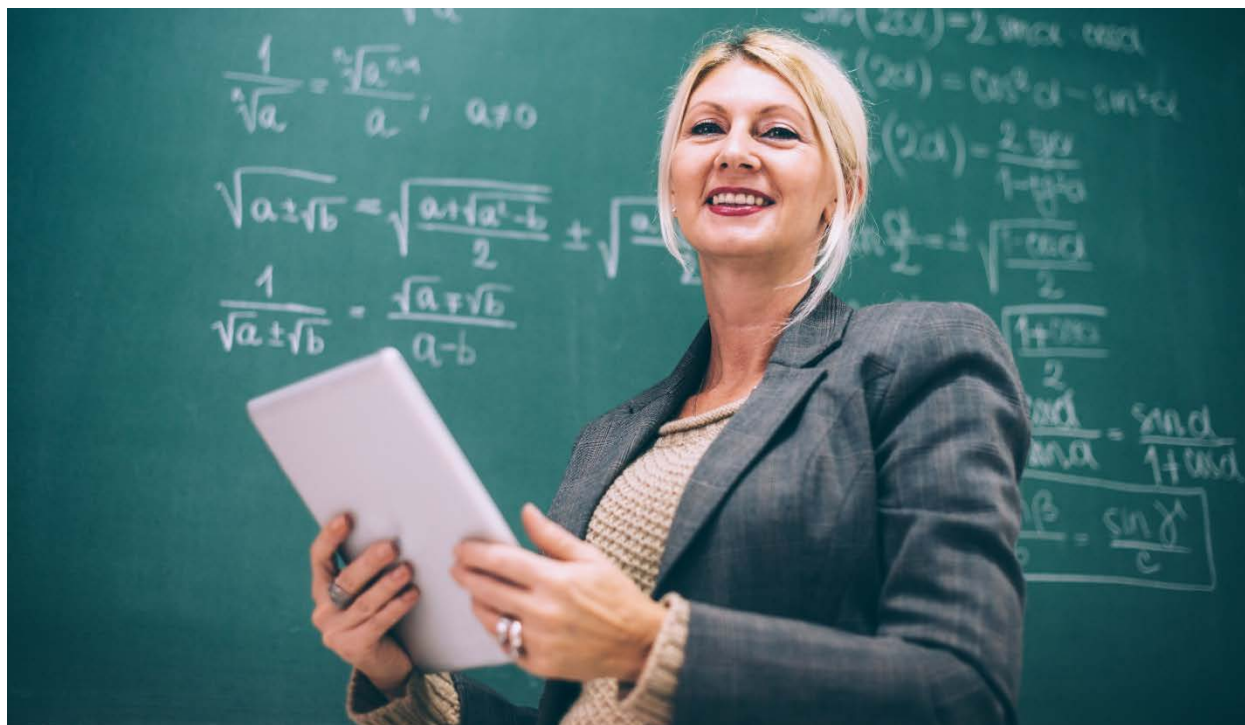
Teacher Training to Identify and Address Student Needs

Across all schools, there is variation in the foci and types of trainings offered to teachers for meeting students' academic and nonacademic needs. Schools provide training on topics that include trauma-sensitive instruction, restorative practices, mental health and adolescent development, data inquiry and using data to inform decisions, identifying students with learning disabilities, differentiated instruction, RETELL (rethinking equity in the teaching of English language learners) and other strategies for teaching English learners, and positive behavior interventions and supports. Some schools invite outside consultants or experts to provide training to staff, whereas other schools utilize existing expertise by having staff members provide training to their colleagues. Furthermore, trainings are provided in a variety of contexts ranging from whole-staff professional development to content-area meetings or professional learning communities (PLCs). Staff at the three higher performing high schools included in the study are more likely to receive training on identifying students who are struggling, whereas staff at struggling high schools are more likely to receive training on strategies to address the needs of specific populations of students (e.g., English learners or students with disabilities).

Challenges

The lack of all staff being trained was frequently identified as a challenge. Schools struggled with determining how to train new staff on previous initiatives, and none had identified an efficient process for doing so. A teacher at a higher performing high school articulated the struggle for newer teachers:

> They haven't had the training that I've had on looking at data... I guess we would have to make sure that either we create a system where the people that have been through these trainings share with teachers who have not been through these trainings, or we make sure that we have these trainings consistently year after year.

Alternatively, some schools provide training that is available only to new staff, resulting in preexisting staff not receiving all necessary trainings. For example, new staff at a struggling high school receive monthly professional development on trauma-sensitive instruction. However, returning staff do not have access to this training. Furthermore, staff who teach electives or vocational classes often are not included in professional development sessions, although they teach the same students as general education teachers. A teacher at another struggling high school commented,

> I know that vocational teachers are starving for pedagogy. They never, ever, ever, ever get any training around teaching techniques, or classroom management, or instructional techniques, and all that good stuff.

Staff at two other struggling high schools expressed similar sentiments. Providing all staff with the same trainings on identifying and responding to students' needs would address this challenge.

Another challenge shared by staff is that they do not receive training on identifying and addressing students' nonacademic needs as well as their academic needs. Struggling high schools focus primarily on responding to students' academic needs. Staff at five struggling high schools expressed the need for training focused on students' nonacademic needs, with staff at the majority of these schools reporting that they have not received this type of training. As a respondent from one struggling school articulated,

> I would say the training that we've given to our teachers around any of this stuff— around mental health concerns, around trauma informed care, anything—it doesn't exist right now, and it, to me, is a pronounced void in the work that we are trying to do.

Similarly, staff at four struggling high schools reported having received no training on how to identify struggling students. Instead, staff rely on trial and error or their instincts to identify struggling students.

Promising Practices

Staff at improving high schools reported ongoing trainings in which topics are regularly reviewed and expanded upon. Such regular reviews reinforce the importance of these topics

and help teachers continue to develop their knowledge. For example, one improving school implemented the Quality Teachers for English Learners program, an initiative to accelerate EL [English learner] students' academic literacy and content knowledge. All staff participated in the program, which included several professional development sessions held on the weekends. To further support this initiative, two of the EL specialists were designated as coaches. One respondent explained,

> [When] the whole school was finished with the professional development sessions, we were then able to partner up with teachers in the building as well as in other schools, and continue the process … [and] continue to send the information to teach and develop our colleagues.

Similarly, staff at a higher performing high school received ongoing training in a data inquiry cycle process, which included professional development sessions and coaching. As a result, staff have been able to narrow their focus over the years to target their needs. As one teacher explained, "The last couple of years… we don't need to follow that [training] anymore. We just need to focus on what we need help in." Staff at two struggling schools also reported returning to professional development topics throughout the year, although they did so with less consistency and did not receive ongoing coaching.

Schools at all levels are making an effort to respond to the academic needs of all of their students, including students with disabilities and English learners. One way they are doing this is by hiring staff with multiple teaching credentials or encouraging existing staff to earn dual or triple certifications. By having staff with additional professional certifications, school leaders can be confident that staff members have the expertise to identify and respond to all students' needs. Specifically, staff at three struggling high schools, one improving high school, and one higher performing high school reported that a selection of staff are participating in programs to earn an additional certification. Participation in these programs is voluntary and, in many cases, is limited to ELA teachers. How staff participate in these programs varied by school and certification; staff are pursuing programs independently, participating in a school-based program conducted by a university professor, or participating in a district-sponsored program. Although staff may have multiple certifications, schools nevertheless should provide regular professional development to teachers to ensure that their knowledge and practices remain up to date.

Some high schools reported capitalizing on the existing knowledge of their staff by having teachers or others provide professional development to their colleagues on topics in which they hold expertise or have received recent training. For example, one of the priorities of an improving high school has been utilizing early warning system indicators to inform instruction. The teacher-leader at the school has expertise in using early warning indicators, and together with school administrators, provides weekly professional developments to staff. Staff at this school also conduct peer observations as a means of providing professional learning. As one teacher explained, "Often times, teachers will do peer observations; they'll look at peer editing, they'll look at planning for their lesson plan and offer each other feedback during professional development." Capitalizing on existing expertise can be a cost-effective way of developing staff

expertise as well as developing teachers' leadership skills. Peer-led training is also a way of addressing the challenge of sending all teachers to the same professional development sessions.

Lessons Learned

- **Training Topics.** Staff at struggling schools reported focusing primarily on responding to students' academic needs, with trainings on teaching strategies for English learners and students with disabilities being the most frequent. However, staff also should receive training to be more responsive to students' nonacademic needs, which can interfere with learning. Staff at struggling schools frequently reported this as a need.

- **Frequency of Training.** Struggling schools were more likely to report one-time trainings than staff at improving or higher performing high schools. Struggling high schools could dedicate time to regularly revisiting professional development topics to reinforce previous learning and dive deeper into content.

- **Structure of Training.** Staff at an improving school reported hands-on professional development sessions in which staff actively engage in guided practice. Staff at struggling high schools could incorporate more opportunities for active teacher involvement by providing time for teachers to examine student data or work, practice using protocols, or participate in other activities relevant to the particular training.

- **Teacher Certifications.** To ensure that all students' needs are being met, school leaders should emphasize teacher credentials when making hiring decisions. Furthermore, existing staff should have opportunities to obtain additional certifications.

- **Peer-led Training.** Capitalizing on the knowledge of existing staff is an effective way to develop staff expertise. In addition to whole-staff trainings, staff members can be identified to work with small groups of staff or individual teachers, allowing those who have not yet received the content to be trained. This structure has the additional benefit of developing staff members' leadership skills as they share their knowledge with their colleagues.

Identifying Student Needs

At both higher performing and struggling schools, data review is a central part of providing support for students. When asked about the process for identifying student needs, staff at both higher performing and struggling high schools described regular review of student work during common planning times. However, staff at struggling high schools often review more limited types of data (only grades and attendance), and collaboration between teachers is informal at times or only beginning to emerge.

Challenges

Staff members at struggling high schools sometimes had difficulty articulating the process for identifying student needs at their school. Instructional staff often are aware of a team or system, but they are not consistently involved in the process for designing and monitoring interventions. Instructional staff at these schools often described their student support teams (SSTs) as consisting of "guidance and social work staff" who meet weekly or biweekly to review student needs and progress. Students are typically referred to the SST by classroom teachers or other school staff who work closely with them. Instructional staff at one struggling school described the process as follows:

> If we notice [the student] seems depressed or could be struggling with something personally, we do a "blue form." There's a team, guidance counselors, administrators, mental health support people, who meet once a week. They might have a resource to help that kid. That kid might get counseling once a week. We have not consistently heard back from what happens to those blue forms.

Some struggling schools rely on a more informal method of interventions, and staff are unaware of an established system for referrals. One staff member explained,

> In my experience, it's been like if a teacher notices something, they say something to one of the facilitators, and maybe they send an e-mail; they might ask other teachers if other teachers are experiencing the same kinds of things that they're concerned about a student, but personally, I haven't found a clear process for referrals.

This uncertainty over how to bring struggling students to the attention of staff who may be able to provide services is a fundamental challenge that needs to be addressed in order for students to receive appropriate supports.

Staff at struggling schools reported having inconsistent processes or expectations regarding student data use. In some schools, data are collected primarily by individual classroom teachers, which can result in student data not being shared until the end of the term. Other staff described their use of student data as "haphazard" and that they "qualitatively just look at what was the student struggling with." Several schools are also still in the process of training staff in data use. One staff member described this process as follows:

> That's going to take a while for them to really understand and for us to really make it a part of our culture here. It's a slow process, but I do believe by this time next year, teachers will be well versed in how to look at the data and [how to] use it on a daily basis.

Other struggling schools expressed that they are "not quite there yet, in terms of schoolwide sharing of data. We're getting to be in a better place. Some PLCs are utilizing data more than others." Clarifying expectations regarding data use is an important step in achieving consistency in the implementation of processes.

Promising Practices

All higher performing and some struggling schools set aside regular time for instructional staff to meet and review student data. Staff at New Mission High School, a higher performing school, find grade-level meetings helpful: "At the grade-level meeting, you have a good chance of seeing at least two of the other teachers that service a student, so it allows you to get some perspective." Staff at an improving school also find departmental meetings to be helpful in identifying specific areas in which students are struggling. They described that during common planning time, teachers

> break up into groups. We have four biology teachers that were there, and we all saw [that] these students aren't performing as well on this standard as the others, so we have to do a little extra reteach on that.

New Mission High School also shares information across grade levels at the start of the new school year to create smoother transitions for students. One staff member described this process:

> The sophomore team last year did this, and the junior team did this. When we send kids to the next grade, there's a spreadsheet with each kid and how this kid learns, and how much you should check in with this kid. It's really prescriptive.

This type of sharing allows staff to learn from those who have had the same students in the past, and it can streamline the process of providing students with supports to help them become successful quickly rather than starting from square one each school year.

All higher performing and improving high schools have a teaming structure through which student needs are identified through regular review of student data. SSTs at these schools meet weekly and include administrators, guidance counselors and psychologists, health workers, and instructional staff. Typically, the procedure for assigning student supports consists of teachers first identifying students (either through observing the students in the classroom or by reviewing data) who might need additional supports, then discussing these students at the team meeting, and finally implementing and monitoring the chosen interventions. One member of the SST at New Mission High School, a higher performing school, described the following:

> We have another Google Doc™ where we're tracking students and student issues. So every week we have an agenda, everyone has access to the agenda and they can make a referral and say, "I'm referring this student for this reason." And so we talk about the student and what kind of intervention plan we can come up with to help that student deal with whatever issue they're dealing with.

Intervention plans are communicated with classroom instructional staff and parents. Another higher performing school (Somerville High School) also implemented a team specific to freshmen. This team, made up of lead teachers and administrators, meets weekly and monitors the academic performance and attendance of all ninth graders.

All higher performing and some struggling schools track student achievement data and regularly review benchmark testing and other student data. Schools employ a variety of data storage methods, such as Google Sheets™, Skills Plus, and Infinite Campus. Teachers can access this data any time if they notice a student is struggling, and they can raise concerns during common planning or regular PLCs. Staff at Somerville High School, a higher performing school, described the process:

> At the end of each quarter, they [teachers] have to do what we call "Skills Plus," where they... track the competencies of each student just to make sure that they're meeting the frameworks. And these go on electronic programs that get done quarterly, and teachers send the sheets home to the parents.

Student competencies are ranked in four levels, and their progression through each framework can be easily displayed and shared with the student or other teachers during review. Staff also described regularly collecting student data based on classroom activities, such as weekly skill quizzes and regular open response. These quizzes are then entered into a master spreadsheet, which is mapped to MCAS readiness.

Lessons Learned

- **Formal Identification Process.** Having a formal process for teachers to flag students whom they notice are struggling is important for ensuring that students quickly receive support. Online forms for teachers to quickly reach out to SST members and frequently scheduled meetings (e.g., weekly) help provide the structure for reaching students in a timely manner.

- **Collaboration Time.** Although most schools emphasize student review of data during common planning time, staff at some struggling high schools find that collaboration is more informally encouraged and that common planning time is not always prioritized over other school duties. Ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to regularly review student data across content and grade levels will support instructors' abilities to identify needs and provide necessary supports.

- **Data Sources.** Although both struggling and higher performing high schools are using data to identify student needs, the type and amount of data and the frequency of review varies. Struggling schools could integrate additional data sources, such as discipline and social-emotional data, in addition to performance and attendance data.

- **Shared Data System.** The majority of schools collect regular assessment data on student progress. Although all higher performing schools track these data in a shared system, some struggling schools have not yet established a consistent database for tracking student data. A shared system, such as Google Sheets, Aspen, or another tracking database, would enable greater sharing of student progress and would allow teachers to easily identify trends and student needs.

Addressing Student Needs

When asked about the supports available to students, staff at all higher performing high schools were able to give clear, detailed information about the schoolwide systems for addressing student needs. Staff at struggling turnaround high schools often reported informal or developing systems in which a structure may be in place but not all staff are involved or sure how to navigate the structure. In addition, the use of differentiation strategies is inconsistent at struggling high schools, whereas consistent application of differentiation techniques is a common practice in higher performing high schools.

Challenges

When asked about challenges related to addressing student needs, staff at several struggling schools mentioned that the variety and sheer volume of needs can be overwhelming for school staff, and that they struggle to meet all needs. Staff at one struggling school noted that the lack of a separate intervention block means that they have a limited amount of time to support students who are struggling in core subjects such as mathematics and ELA. According to one staff member,

> We have a lot of students that do not pass the MCAS on the first try. In 11th and 12th grade, we're doing the math MCAS on Wednesday and Thursday. It's an enormous number of students that still need it.

Staff at struggling schools also reported that they do not always have the infrastructure necessary to support students in all areas:

> There's academic struggles and social struggles. There are kids who are struggling socially for a variety of reasons. Like many comprehensive district-type schools, we don't necessarily have the supports here for them. We have the best that we can.

The school staff noted that although they have an on-site counselor for students who are part of the special education program, their guidance department and partners are not able to provide sufficient support for students in the general population. Staff at several struggling schools also described inconsistencies in how teachers address student needs: "I think it varies quite a bit from classroom to classroom. I can speak to what happens in my room, but I don't know if that's necessarily what's happening across the school." While several schools cited a focus on reteaching units based on student performance, staff said "there needs to be more of it done. I don't know if it's consistent across the board."

Staff at multiple schools also frequently expressed frustration over the lack of communication from the student support team (SST) or between teams:

> [Classroom teachers] often are unaware of the different services that accompany a student. They're able to identify students who are special ed[ucation]-involved or English language learners, just from the basic information that they have. If there are other services that are being provided, either inside or outside of the school, there's no strong, central way that we communicate that, at all.

Staff described informal systems for communication, such as e-mail and dropping in during class time to communicate about student progress during the week. Struggling schools frequently do not have a clear system of monitoring student responses to interventions, instead relying on guidance counselors or operating on a "case-by-case" basis to determine who will review data and how frequently interventions will be adjusted.

Promising Practices

Staff at higher performing schools described a focus on differentiating lessons for students and "meeting kids where they're at." Staff emphasize the use of instructional strategies such as group work, individual activities, and one-on-one teacher support for students. At Somerville High School, staff described the development of a "heterogeneous open honors group," noting that instructional staff have "spent most of their PLC time this year working on the curriculum and differentiating and being very clear what honors is and how to support struggling students." Some struggling schools also implemented reteaching practices based on review of regular student assessments; however, these practices were inconsistently applied in the classrooms. One teacher explained that the reteaching process is "for planning successive units. If the success is not what we had hoped for, we will design new tasks that involve the same skills and understanding so students can have a second chance." Teachers also noted that during the initial instruction, students are pulled out and organized into small groups if they are observed to be struggling with essential aspects of the unit. According to staff, there are "daily and weekly assessments," and "every day there's a learning target that is linked to where we're aiming for the end of the unit." Students at all levels benefit from staff identifying student needs for each unit and then addressing those needs through the use of individualized strategies.

All higher performing high schools track student responses to interventions in shared systems, which range from shared spreadsheets to a proprietary database. An administrator at Somerville High School described the process of automating their data system:

> The administrator on duty wrote a grant with a grant writer downtown and was able to create a program in our information system that now pulls [those] data out for us. So it frees up those teachers' times to focus more on curriculum.

Somerville is also in the process of building a historical database of K–8 interventions across the district, ensuring that "[the data are] documented and collected so that whenever there's an issue, we can go directly to that student and see what interventions were in place." In each of these systems, members of the SST and instructional staff have access to student data and can view intervention updates. These systems include data such as grades, attendance and discipline records, and classroom behavior as reported by instructional staff. Student responses to interventions are monitored through regular review of these data by the SST. At New Mission and Somerville High Schools, as well as two improving schools, SST members are assigned tasks for each student, which are monitored through the use of a shared spreadsheet. Each week, these staff members provide updates on student progress based on the assigned intervention and student data. Although some lower performing schools have implemented data systems for student behavior, these databases typically are much newer and therefore frequently incomplete.

Lessons Learned

- **SST Members and Communication.** Although all schools have SSTs, struggling schools could benefit from instructional staff being included on these teams with guidance and mental health staff. SSTs also should ensure that follow-up with referring teachers occurs regarding supports provided to their students. In addition, teachers should continue to be involved in discussions regarding those students to determine whether the supports have been successful.

- **Differentiation Consistency.** Whereas higher performing schools have regular meetings and an established practice of differentiation, some struggling schools have found that staff are inconsistent in their use of reteaching and differentiation strategies. Ensuring that all staff are familiar with the appropriate strategies and that they employ them effectively will help all students receive the support they need for success.

- **Monitoring.** As with identifying student needs, a formal process is needed for monitoring and providing follow-up on students who are receiving intervention to ensure that student supports are appropriate and effective. Assigning regular follow-up tasks to members of the SST and tracking these tasks on a shared spreadsheet not only provides a structure for monitoring assistance to students but also ensures that responsibilities are shared across the team.

Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan

Across all schools, there is variation in the formality of schoolwide behavior plans. The majority of high schools have established behavior expectations, or a code of conduct, that they distribute to students via the student handbook. In general, struggling schools are more likely to focus on managing specific, counterproductive student behaviors, such as cell phone use, late arrival to school, and loitering in the hallways, whereas higher performing schools are more likely to focus on broadly improving school culture. For example, the majority of staff at higher performing schools discussed focusing on characteristics that they want to instill in their students, such as respectfulness, integrity, and politeness. Further, when challenging behaviors occur, higher performing schools view them as learning opportunities and engage students in reflective conversations, rather than immediately assigning consequences that do not address the root cause of the counterproductive behavior. All schools reported difficulties with consistency in implementing behavior management strategies across staff, typically reporting at least some variation between teachers.

Challenges

Ensuring consistency in the implementation of behavior expectations is a challenge experienced by all high schools. Staff at two higher performing high schools, one improving high school, and one struggling high school reported that overall there is consistency, with some minor variations among teachers. One respondent noted, "I would say [we have] 90 to 95% [consistency]. We use common language, common understanding of expectations.

Implementation might be a little bit different, but we all use it during the week, and the students know it well."

However, most struggling high schools reported greater inconsistencies that often undermined the system and created confusion for students. For example, inconsistencies existed among teachers. As one respondent at a higher performing high school explained, "Sometimes teachers can work against each other because some enforce the rule very strictly, and some [teachers] are very loose with it…. That can be an issue." This struggle was reported by struggling high schools as well, as one teacher explained: "I think the kids know that… it's inconsistent from teacher to teacher, so it really takes the weight out of [the system]." Alternatively, inconsistencies could emerge as schoolwide expectations gradually break down over time. This can be particularly challenging because students learn that any changes likely will be short-lived, as one respondent noted, "[After] everything falls apart, they can just do what they want." None of the schools described a process for ensuring consistency across staff.

Furthermore, administrators and teachers differed in their reports of implementation fidelity, suggesting that administrators are not aware of the challenges and difficulties that teachers are experiencing with respect to managing student behavior and its impact in the classroom. Teachers and administrators in two struggling high schools had different accounts of their behavior system. For example, in one of the schools, the principal described a high level of consistency: "One thing that I'm doing is ensuring that we're consistent with our methods, we're consistent with our approach, we're consistent with our expectations, and understanding that it's a process." However, teachers' perceptions at this school were divergent; the teachers reported that expectations varied widely across the building and that day to day, "[Students are] very confused about what they're supposed to be doing… [rules] are not articulated to us, so things are changing… we can't even keep up." One possible reason for these discrepancies is that staff are not referring students to the office because they fear that frequent discipline referrals could reflect on them as a teacher. As one teacher at a struggling high school articulated, "[Writing disciplinary referrals] could send up a red flag that you can't handle your classroom." Another teacher commented, "[Teachers] are afraid to get fired." These actions prevent accuracy in the discipline data that administrators review, and this lack of accuracy may result in false conclusions about the fidelity of implementation.

Struggling schools also reported difficulties with students following the rules and accepting consequences for their behavior. Staff at multiple schools reported that students intentionally disregard the rules through actions such as having their cell phones out, loitering in the hallways, not following the dress code, and arriving late to class. This may be a result of teachers inconsistently enforcing the rules, and some teachers reported self-defeating attitudes. For example, a respondent from a struggling high school commented, "Everyone in the school says we need rules, but we haven't had them in forever, so it's like trying to teach a dog new tricks. You can't teach a dog new tricks. [It's] too late." Furthermore, staff at multiple, struggling high schools reported students not accepting punishments and school staff being lax about enforcing these punishments. As a respondent at one of these schools explained,

> I know the detention started out strongly when they were trying to enforce it, and now it has definitely fallen to the wayside…. Kids decided not to go; they weren't going to suspend them for not showing up for detention. I don't know what the solution is.

Staff at several other high schools described a similar progression, with students not accepting and staff not enforcing consequences, thus creating a vicious cycle. Although there likely are many reasons for this development, one reason may be that the punishments are not addressing the root of the problem. A respondent at a struggling high school explained,

> [The discipline] doesn't necessarily address the reason why [students are] skipping [class] or why they're failing all of their classes… I think it'd be very helpful if, instead of the quick, punitive protocols that we have, that we somehow created more resources that help support the kids.

Shifting behavior management from a consequences-focused system to a support-focused system can be successful if school staff all are on board with changing the standard response to student behavior, given that creating consistency remains important.

Promising Practices

Higher performing schools are more likely to focus on broadly improving the school culture rather than on managing specific student behaviors. For example, the majority of staff at higher performing schools discussed focusing on characteristics that they want to instill in their students, such as respectfulness, integrity, politeness, or "being a decent human being." As a school leader at New Mission High School explained,

> We don't bombard kids with rules, it's not loose around here, but it's our culture. If you have rules, somebody is telling you what to do. If you have a culture, you know what to do… We use that to really, really get our kids to be successful and our kids have a general understanding and pride in our school.

Staff at higher performing schools often view themselves as role models for students, as reflected in the following comment from a teacher at one higher performing high school:

> I'm going to set the standard for what I expect from you. Respect, I set that tone. I have to respect you, just like I want you to respect me. Just do what I do. For the most part, [students] do that.

When challenging behaviors occur, staff at higher performing high schools use those behaviors as learning opportunities by having a conversation with the student and connecting back to the school's culture. As a school leader at Brockton High School explained,

> When we talk to them [students] in the office about [a counterproductive behavior], we talk about their behavior, and we'll relate it back to Boxer PRIDE [by asking the student], "How can you change [your behavior] to be more of these five traits?"

Furthermore, one of the higher performing high schools has a dedicated school committee focused on how the school can better integrate its values into the school culture.

Two higher performing high schools, one improving high school, and two struggling high schools articulated well-defined processes for responding to student behavior. Staff make every attempt to keep students in school rather than reverting to suspensions as a primary discipline tool. Staff at each of these schools described a variety of consequences or interventions that progress in severity depending on the infraction. Staff at these schools are knowledgeable about when to call on administrators, and they trust that the administrators will support them. Furthermore, parents and families typically are a formal part of the process for addressing student behavior. Families often are contacted early in the process after a student receives a warning or first disciplinary referral. This process varies from that at most struggling high schools, in which defined systems and processes are lacking; as a result, staff feel unsupported by the administration, confused about whom they should contact for assistance, and uncertain about when asking for help is appropriate. As a teacher at one struggling high school explained, "We just need to know… what is the code of conduct? What's the consequences for this?" Clearly defining these processes for handling student behavior can result in more staff confidence.

Staff at struggling schools frequently reported difficulties with students following the rules, whereas staff at improving and higher performing schools are less likely to report these challenges. One possible reason for lower instances of challenging student behavior could be that staff at higher performing and improving high schools reported building and nurturing their relationships with students that they can then use to encourage positive behaviors, rather than "coercing kids to do the right things with punishments or consequences." One way in which teachers build these relationships with students is by engaging in open, honest conversations with them when problems occur, rather than immediately reporting them to the office for discipline. As a respondent at one improving high school described,

> This is a teachable moment, and [students] need to learn [from] this mistake. [I'm] not lecturing them. I find it interesting that if you just say to [students], "Oh, you just hurt my feelings," if they've been disrespectful and they're like, "What? I didn't mean to… I didn't mean to hurt your feelings." They begin to see you as a human being.

Similarly, staff at another improving high school described engaging in conversations with students: "If you can get down to the activity or… the reason [a] kid is doing what he is doing, that's a much more powerful conversation than [saying], 'Stop doing that.'"

Staff at struggling high schools may benefit from professional development or support regarding the process of engaging in such conversations with students, enabling them to build rapport and a culture of respect with students.

Overall, schools collect a variety of data related to students' academic performance. In addition, staff also should collect and review data related to student behavior in order to adjust systems and structures appropriately. Staff at two higher performing high schools, one

improving high school, and six struggling high schools described some data collection for monitoring behavior expectations. The primary monitoring effort of these schools is the examination of office referrals, disaggregated by teacher. Other data commonly examined include suspension rates, detention lists for students who reappear frequently, and referral data to identify the most common challenging behaviors. However, some schools delve deeper to examine data to determine the fidelity of implementation. At one struggling high school, the behavior team is responsible for examining data such as the following:

> How many "paws"[8] were given out and by how many teachers. The difference is... 97 were given out in this week by 10 teachers. You see that across the board. There's a small number of teachers that are using it with fidelity, and you can see it really working in their classrooms.

Another school described using the data to identify teachers who need support. One improving high school described using teacher referral data to inform conversations they have with teachers. As a school leader described, "[We go to the teacher and say], I see you don't have any student detentions this week. Was it really that great of a week, or do you need some support or systems? What's going on?" In addition to collecting data, schools should be using those data to adjust their systems to ensure fidelity and to make sure the system is responding to students' needs.

Lessons Learned

- **Communicate Expectations to Students.** For the majority of schools, student expectations are defined in the student handbook that is distributed to students at the beginning of the year. However, schools should be actively sharing and reviewing expectations with students; teachers from four struggling high schools noted that they don't believe students understand the expectations at their school. Staff at one improving high school engage in "intentional teaching" of the student handbook at the beginning of the year, and they dedicate time to reviewing expectations with new students. Furthermore, staff at a struggling high school host grade-level assemblies to reinforce and revisit behavior expectations throughout the year. Likewise, staff at other struggling schools could set aside time at the start of the year and periodically throughout the year to review expectations with students.

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[8] The term *paws* refers to a positive development reinforcement token given to students for displaying desirable behaviors; the term is associated with the school mascot.

- **Establish a Positive Schoolwide Culture.** Staff at all higher performing schools create a positive schoolwide culture by focusing on desirable student characteristics, instead of managing specific unwanted student behaviors. Staff view student displays of counterproductive behaviors as learning opportunities and engage in conversations with students to get at the root cause of the behaviors. Further, staff at higher performing schools relate the student's behavior back to the school's culture in order to have students reflect on ways to improve in the future. Staff at struggling schools may want to provide professional development on how to build relationships with students and facilitate these reflective conversations.

- **Involve Parents.** Several schools treat parents as an asset and involve them in their system for addressing student misbehavior. As an administrator at one struggling school commented, "Our biggest support, to be honest with you, has been the parental support [in regards to] student discipline." Parent engagement may occur through phone calls with parents or by inviting parents to the school for an in-person meeting.

- **Use Discipline Data to Inform Decision Making.** Using discipline data to examine variations by teacher can identify teachers who have strong classroom management skills and can serve as exemplars for their colleagues, as well as those teachers who may be overwhelmed and may need support.

Wraparound Services and External Partners

Across all high schools, there is variation in the types of partnerships established with local agencies to support students and their families. The most frequently cited partnerships provide health care services, primarily mental health counseling. Schools also vary in how they structure wraparound services. The majority of schools have a position responsible for coordinating services; however, whereas many schools have a position dedicated primarily to developing and maintaining external partnerships, other schools have a staff member who divides these responsibilities with those of another role. Furthermore, the majority of schools rely on teacher identification of struggling students rather than having a more systematic identification process.

Challenges

The majority of schools rely on teacher identification or student/family self-identification to identify students in need of services rather than having a process for assessing the needs of all students and families throughout the school year. Most teachers rely on their observations to identify struggling students. As one teacher at a struggling high school described, "If we feel like a student has something going on and we have a concern, we'll bring it up to the adjustment counselor." Without a systematic assessment process, however, it is possible that students in need of services are not being properly identified and therefore do not receive necessary services. This is a particular challenge for one struggling high school, as one respondent described:

> I just don't feel like we have a really coordinated system of wraparound services so we can identify those issues and really tackle them head on…. Things are all over the place. Trying to bring that all together in a systematic way [is a struggle].

In addition to teacher observations, examining student data to identify struggling students entails a more comprehensive approach. Many schools have started this process by using attendance data to identify students who are not consistently attending school.

Staff at several struggling high schools cited a lack of communication about wraparound services that are available and provided. Specifically, few schools described a process for communicating with and educating parents on the services available, which may limit those who self-identify for assistance. A respondent at one struggling high school described parents not taking advantage of the services: "I don't think it's the question that they don't care, [it is] because the information is not being sent out… There is a lack of someone saying [to parents], '[These] are things that are offered.'" Another respondent added, "We probably don't do a good job advertising what we do." In addition to the lack of communication with families, staff at several schools identified internal communication as a challenge. Staff feel they do not know about the partner organizations, the available services, or next steps. Specifically, staff mentioned identifying students for services but not receiving follow-up communication about whether or not the students' needs were being addressed. As a teacher at a struggling high school explained, "I fill out the [school support team] SST referrals, and maybe something happens, but I don't frequently interact with members of the SST enough to actually be able to follow-up in person." In addition, some staff either were unfamiliar with specific services provided or had incomplete knowledge of the types of services available at the school. Dedicating time to inform staff about the services and partners available, as well as follow-up with staff after a referral has been made, can improve communication across the school.

Several of the schools cited an increase in the number of students with high needs as their student demographics have changed. Staff reported that responding to these demographic shifts has been a challenge: "[There are] all these things that you just never even imagine[d] would be happening." Schools often are slow to respond to these changing needs by reconsidering existing partnerships or establishing new partnerships. According to a respondent at one struggling school, "It is really difficult to find support. I think as our population has changed so much… [The guidance department] really needs to be supported with the big changes of the population." Staff at many schools reported an increase in the number of students working jobs late into the evening or having to drop off siblings in the morning, resulting in those students being tardy to school. A teacher at a struggling high school explained, "We'll find a student's out a lot [from school], and [when] we ask them why… they're working because their parents are behind in their bills." Schools struggle with how to support these students. When describing a local market that has students working into the early morning hours, a school leader at one struggling school articulated the following challenge:

> I need to get out to those markets and begin a conversation in a way that isn't going to cause our students to be fired. Those are real-world conversations we need to have… [Many of our students] are affected by this.

Fully understanding student needs and barriers to success is an important step in schools being able to adjust their supports to meet these evolving needs and to manage these barriers.

Promising Practices

As mentioned previously, it can be challenging to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the partners and services available to students. To address this need, at the beginning of the school year, one struggling high school hosted a community resource fair, which was attended by more than 60 organizations. A school leader used this time to gather information from each organization about the services they provide in order to "create a menu [of options]" to ensure that the school is equipped to respond quickly and appropriately to students' needs. Furthermore, Brockton High School, a higher performing high school, distributes pre- and post-tests to staff following a presentation on the providers and services available "to make sure [staff] retain that information." Dedicating this time for staff to become knowledgeable about the services available to students is especially important given that most schools rely on teacher referrals as a primary method of identifying struggling students. Another way of determining student needs is through a partnership with an organization that helps teachers review each of their students to identify potential needs. The organization then helps connect the students with partner organizations to provide the needed services that have been identified. An example of such an organization is City Connects, which annually conducts a "whole-class review" with each teacher to review the needs of every student in the class and determine tailored supports that can be provided.

In addition to communicating with all stakeholders within the school, school staff should be communicating with families to educate them about the supports that are available and to better align supports with particular needs. To accomplish this, several schools dedicate time to contacting families via phone or conducting home visits. Establishing open communication with families can help staff better understand the difficulties that students and families are experiencing, which in turn can allow staff to align supports more effectively. For example, after a student was repeatedly absent, staff at one struggling school called the student's home and learned that the student's public transit pass to travel to school was too expensive for the family. In response, the school obtained a new pass for the student within 24 hours. If the school staff had not contacted the family, they might not have identified the root cause of the student's absenteeism, thus delaying getting the student back into school regularly. In addition to phone calls and home visits, struggling schools may want to consider other mechanisms for accurately identifying students' needs. For example, one struggling high school invites students to complete a

A school leader used this time to gather information from each organization about the services they provide in order to "create a menu [of options]" to ensure that the school is equipped to respond quickly and appropriately to students' needs.

questionnaire (see the Lessons Learned section below). Communicating with families can help school staff identify the challenges they are experiencing and empower school staff to offer targeted services or family members to seek assistance from the school.

Coordinating with stakeholders regularly to discuss struggling students ensures that the students' needs are met quickly and holistically. Staff at Brockton High School, as well as staff at three struggling high schools, participate in regular meetings with stakeholders across the school to discuss particular students' needs. For example, one struggling school hosts a case conferencing meeting weekly regarding students who have been identified for wraparound services. As one school leader described,

> [Clinicians, partners, and other support staff] talk about the academics, they talk about the clinical piece, they have the CFCs [community field coordinators] talk about behavioral issues, and they come up with a plan, and that plan could be working with the family… the plan could be, I'm going to work to hook them up with these outside agencies.

The meeting uses a rolling agenda, with updates being provided on students who were previously discussed. Another struggling school participates in a districtwide initiative in which

> a family that is high risk for multiple factors could be brought to this table, and you have probation, the police department; you have clinicians, mental health counselors; DCF is there, and the case is presented; and then all the wraparound services are offered. Everyone talks about it in that moment, so it kind of removes that obstacle of one person making a million phone calls. And rather, it's like assigning the things to do right there.

Having everyone in the same room allows for all of the student's or family's needs to be met and streamlines the process for school staff and family members.

Establishing partnerships to provide a variety of services ensures that all students' needs are met. Nearly all schools provide mental health services, which may include on-site counseling or referrals to local counselors. However, schools vary widely in the other services that they provide. For example, four schools provide additional health services such as dental services, eyeglasses, or influenza vaccinations. Specifically, one school houses a health clinic that employs health professionals who provide a variety of services: "You can get your flu shot, you can get any STD checked, all that kind of stuff right here within the building and receive your counseling support." Furthermore, two higher performing schools and one struggling school provide resources for pregnant students and young mothers. Several schools provide supports beyond those related to healthcare. Five turnaround schools provide clothing and food services for students. For example, one improving school has a food pantry; "[students] come in with a basket, and we just give them [food]. If they have to carry things, we bring it to their homes." Students at this school also receive dinner when they stay after school. Five schools also work with organizations that provide housing support for students facing homelessness, and two other schools have partnerships with organizations to provide fuel assistance to students' homes during the winter months.

In addition to providing general supports, several high schools cater to the needs of their students and families by partnering with organizations to assist with employment and college planning. Many students want to work after school or during the summer months, and they need support in navigating the job-search process. In response, four turnaround schools assist students with job placement. For example, one improving school partners with a community group (the Private Industry Council), which has a school-based representative who "looks for jobs for students and internships and teach[es] them how to dress or how to interview. How to make a resume. It's not, 'Here, have a job'; it's [the] other skills that they need to get the job." Furthermore, all higher performing and six turnaround high schools partner with organizations to support students in preparing for and applying to college. These supports include college preparation, access, affordability, FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid], and application support. Some schools provide these resources internally, typically through their guidance department. As a staff member at New Mission (a higher performing high school) explained,

> [We discuss] particular students that may be struggling, who's doing good [with the] college process, who's going [to which college], how could we help them, and where are they in their college process?… Do they have their [college] applications?…. Do they have their application and everything they need within their application, and who needs these safety nets?

These college and career supports are important for schools to offer in order to prepare students for moving beyond high school.

Lessons Learned

- **Designate a Coordinator of Wraparound Supports.** Supporting wraparound work without a coordinator can be a challenge. As a respondent at a school without this position described, "It's not a one-stop shop where I can find out all the information I need. I have to go over here, and then this person will see me over here… When it's not systematic, then it affects the kids." Struggling high schools without a coordinator may want to consider establishing a new position or having an existing staff member take on these responsibilities to ensure that all school staff know whom to contact when a student is in need of these supports.

- **Support Students in the College and Job Application Process.** Many students require targeted support in the college application or employment process. Higher performing high schools are aware of this need and either provide the support internally through the guidance office or by partnering with external organizations. Supports encompassed all stages of applying for college or employment, including evaluating college affordability, applying for financial aid, and preparing for college; or resume building, completing a job application, interviewing, and job placement. Struggling schools may want to provide additional support to counselors and other school staff so they can work with students to address these needs. In addition, schools may want to leverage existing community organizations by establishing partnerships that address these needs.

- **Employ a Systematic Process to Assess Student Needs.** The majority of schools relied on teacher identification or student or family self-identification of needs. Without a system in place, students in need may not be identified for services in a timely manner. Struggling high schools could dedicate a time during the year for teachers, guidance counselors, or other staff to conduct a needs assessment of all students. Schools should consider identifying a primary teacher (such as a homeroom or advisory teacher) to lead this assessment for each student; however, involving other staff members (such as content or specialty teachers) in this conversation can be helpful in ensuring that all perspectives and knowledge are included.

- **Assess All Students' Needs Regularly.** Several high schools have dedicated time, such as SST meetings, during which they discuss struggling students. During these meetings, progress-check updates should be provided on students whom the group has previously discussed. Struggling high schools could establish similar meetings, or determine other dedicated times during which staff meet to discuss students' nonacademic needs. This time would be used to ensure that the services that students are receiving are meeting their needs, to make changes, or to discontinue services if the students' need has been met. If classroom teachers are not a part of this meeting, the status of the students' needs and services should be communicated to those teachers as well.

- **Assess All of a Student's Needs.** Although a student may be referred based on one particular difficulty that he or she is experiencing, it is possible that the student is facing other challenges that also need to be addressed. One struggling high school described an intake questionnaire that is completed by all students who are referred for services: "We do have a social-emotional questionnaire that the student fills [out] that helps us, that gives us a heads up… what areas [the student] will need support with." Struggling high schools may want to incorporate a questionnaire or assessment to examine all of the students' needs before settling on the types of supports the students require.
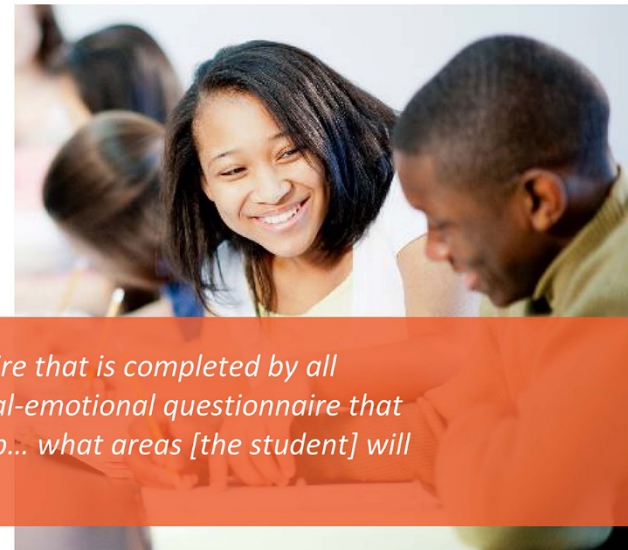
> *One struggling high school described an intake questionnaire that is completed by all students who are referred for services: "We do have a social-emotional questionnaire that the student fills [out] that helps us, that gives us a heads up… what areas [the student] will need support with."*

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings presented in this report, ESE staff can reflect on supports provided to turnaround high schools and thoughtfully consider whether there are specific ways in which the supports can and should be improved to help schools better focus on specific activities that tend to lead to improved student outcomes. For example, based on findings from this evaluation, ESE may want to develop specific "look-fors" in high school SRG applications or renewals that go beyond the overall turnaround practices and focus on the specific strategies that are characteristic of improving and higher performing high schools. ESE also may want to consider developing customized, school- or district-specific supports to address common challenges reported by struggling high schools, which are described herein.

Key Takeaways

This research identified three to five key lessons learned in each of the seven topics. These lessons learned are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Lessons Learned by Topic

Lessons Learned	
Communication With Staff	
Staff Inclusion in Decision Making	Include staff in committees and decision making as a way to ensure staff buy-in and provide the opportunity for important feedback.
Multiple Forms of Communication	To combat e-mail overload, ensure that important information is provided in multiple ways, such as in person, via e-mail, and on paper, and send out a weekly, bullet-point memo outlining the most important highlights for the week.
Consistency and Follow-up	A formal system for providing feedback and maintaining communication about follow-up is important to maintain staff involvement and buy-in.
Instructional Schedule	
Staff Inclusion in Schedule Development	When making decisions about the master schedule, include instructional staff on scheduling committees and in administering schoolwide surveys, and provide opportunities for feedback.
Time for Instruction	Balance instructional time to avoid overwhelming students with extended periods of inaction; 60-minute periods are less stressful for students while still allowing time for projects and in-depth analysis. Ensure that schedules allow for adequate intervention and enrichment time.
Collaboration and Coordination of Staff	Allow adequate time for staff to plan and collaborate on lesson plans, including with special education instructors and interventionists. A coteaching model can also provide students with individualized education programs a more cohesive structure than separate pullout sessions.

Lessons Learned	
Teacher Training to Identify and Address Student Needs	
Training Topics	Staff should receive training to be more responsive to students' nonacademic needs as well as their academic needs because nonacademic needs can interfere with learning.
Frequency of Training	Dedicate time to regularly revisiting professional development topics to reinforce previous learning and dive deeper into content.
Structure of Training	Incorporate hands-on opportunities for active teacher involvement in trainings by providing time for teachers to actively engage in guided practice, examine student data or work, practice using protocols, or participate in other activities relevant to the particular training.
Teacher Certifications	Leaders should emphasize teacher credentials when making hiring decisions and offer opportunities for existing staff to obtain additional certifications.
Peer-led Training	Capitalize on the knowledge of existing staff by having them conduct whole-staff trainings or work with small groups of staff or individual teachers. This also develops staff members' leadership skills as they share their knowledge with their colleagues.
Identifying Student Needs	
Formal Identification Process	Create a formal process for teachers to quickly and easily flag students whom they notice are struggling. Online forms for teachers to reach out to SST members, along with frequently scheduled meetings, can provide a structure for quickly identifying students who need help.
Collaboration Time	Give teachers protected time in their schedules to regularly review student data across content and grade levels to identify student needs and necessary supports.
Data Sources	Regularly review many data sources, including discipline and social-emotional data in addition to performance and attendance data.
Shared Data System	Use a shared system, such as Google Sheets, Aspen, or another tracking database, for broader sharing of student progress and easier teacher identification of trends and student needs.
Addressing Student Needs	
SST Members and Communication	Instructional staff should be included on SSTs with guidance and mental health staff. SSTs also should follow up with referring teachers regarding supports provided to their students, and teachers should be involved in discussions to determine whether the supports have been successful.
Differentiation Consistency	Ensure that all staff are familiar with appropriate differentiation strategies, and employ them effectively through regular meetings to ensure that all students are receiving the support they need for success.
Monitoring	Create a formal process for monitoring and providing follow-up on students receiving intervention, including assigning regular follow-up tasks to SST members and tracking actions on a shared spreadsheet.

Lessons Learned	
Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan	
Communicate Expectations to Students	Set aside time both at the start of the year and periodically throughout the year to review expectations with students.
Establish a positive schoolwide culture	Focus on cultivating positive student characteristics and approach counterproductive behaviors as learning opportunities for students. Engage in conversations with students to get at the root cause of counterproductive behaviors.
Involve Parents	Treat parents as an asset. Parents can be engaged through phone calls or by bringing parents into the school for an in-person meeting.
Use Discipline Data to Inform Decision Making	Use discipline data to examine variations by teacher to identify those who have strong classroom management skills and can serve as exemplars for their colleagues, as well as those teachers who may be overwhelmed and may need support.
Wraparound Services and External Partners	
Designate a Coordinator of Wraparound Supports	Consider establishing a new position or having an existing staff member take on wraparound coordinator responsibilities to ensure that all school staff know whom to contact when a student needs wraparound supports.
Support Students in the College and Job Application Process	Support students throughout the college and employment application process. Schools may want to consider leveraging existing community organizations to address these needs if they do not have the capacity to do so internally.
Employ a Systematic Process to Assess Student Needs	Dedicate a time for teachers, guidance counselors, or other staff to conduct a needs assessment of all students. Schools should consider identifying a primary teacher to lead this assessment for each student and also involve other staff members to ensure all perspectives and knowledge are included.
Assess All Students' Needs Regularly	Hold regular meetings dedicated to discussing struggling students. These meetings should include updates on previously discussed students to ensure that the services are meeting their needs, to make changes, or to stop services if the students' needs have been met. If classroom teachers are not a part of this meeting, communicate the status of students' needs and services to those teachers.
Assess All of a Student's Needs	Although a student may be referred based on one particular difficulty that he or she is experiencing, the student also may be facing other challenges that need to be addressed. Consider incorporating a questionnaire or assessment to examine all of the student's needs before settling on the required supports.