

5.27.14

For discussion purposes only

Key:

NI: Needs Improvement D: Developing P: Proficient

Mass Insight State Development Network School Turnaround Diagnostic: Indiana

Purpose: The purpose of this brief report is to provide an overview of the findings from Mass Insight Education's State Development Network (SDN) diagnostic review of the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE's) work on school turnaround. The diagnostic process is driven by the SDN framework for school turnaround; it is designed to explore and gauge the state's effectiveness and ability to drive and support turnaround efforts statewide through the seven core components of a comprehensive state-level strategy, structure, and process. The accompanying chart provides a summary of findings based on the SDN framework components and identifies potential high leverage areas for action. The SDN will continue to serve as a professional learning community and thought partner for the state as it identifies its priorities and develops an action plan to enhance work on school turnaround.

Diagnostic Process: The evidence for this analysis was collected from a series of stakeholder interviews conducted by Mass Insight Education on a state site visit in April 2014. Interviewees included representatives from the Indiana Department of Education, and school and district leadership. In addition to the interviews, Mass Insight Education collected relevant data and documents to inform the diagnostic process.

How to Read this Report: The chart below organizes the diagnostic findings across each of the seven components of the SDN Framework for School Turnaround. The summary analysis for each component provides additional detail on specific sub-elements of each component. The chart also displays qualitative ratings of the state's current status in addressing the elements of each component. Component elements can receive a rating of *Needs Improvement (NI)*, *Developing (D)*, or *Proficient (P)* based on the preponderance of evidence. Overall component ratings are also provided at the end of each section. The findings are not meant to suggest that the state must address each of these areas immediately, but rather provide an overall framework and assist in identifying priorities and high leverage areas that may be appropriate to address first. The final section of the report describes four areas that could, with some attention, positively impact IDOE's work with chronically low-performing schools and districts.

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| 1. Policy: Cultivate a policy environment, governance structure, and operational and staffing flexibility necessary for dramatic school turnaround. | | |
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| Guiding Questions | Evidence & Analysis | Summary |
| a. Does state law and SEA policy, regulations, and practice provide LEAs with the school-level operational and staffing flexibility required for turnaround? | Indiana law and IDOE policy provide schools with the operational and staffing flexibility required for school turnaround. Principals of D and F schools have authority over hiring, budget, curriculum, and time. Principals reported that they are able to select, remove, and replace teachers based on performance. The schools managed under contract by external partners have four-year contracts that permit them full control over staff selection and hiring, and school operation independent of the local district. | P |
| b. Do SEA and other state-level leaders provide public support and political cover for dramatic school turnaround? | The state policy environment provides local leaders with the authority to support turnaround. The accountability system makes the consequences for failure clear. School and district staff reported that Assistant Superintendent Teresa Brown has asked questions and made suggestions that encouraged them to make leadership and curricular changes. IDOE's requirement that districts provide evidence of an incumbent principal's ability to successfully lead a low performing school has resulted in many leadership changes in priority schools. None of the interviewees cited examples of IDOE or other state leaders making public statements in support of specific turnaround work. | P |
| c. Does the SEA have the authority and resources to take responsibility for turning around low-performing schools, authorize charter schools and control the allocation of innovation funds to build capacity in chronically low-performing schools where district efforts have failed? | IDOE has the authority to take over a school after Year 6 of an F grade. The State Board conducts a hearing for each school and makes a recommendation which can include state takeover or chartering of the school. To date, the state has taken over 6 schools and given 4-year contracts to private organizations to operate the schools independent of the district. Although the State Board of Education is still committed to strategies that result in terminating district authority over persistently failing schools, school and district staff said that they were unsure whether takeovers will continue in the future. | D |
| OVERALL RATING | State policy provides IDOE, district, and school leaders with the authority necessary to turnaround schools. Given the political conflicts of the past two years, there is some uncertainty in districts about whether there is still support for state takeover of schools that fail to improve over 6 years. | D |

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| 2. Strategy: Commit to a comprehensive, cohesive, agency-wide vision, mission, and set of aligned activities to turn around the state's lowest performing schools. | | |
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| Guiding Questions | Evidence & Analysis | Summary |
| a. Does the SEA have a clear school turnaround theory of action , i.e., description of the elements of a turnaround and the expected short- and long-term outcomes? | <p>With the change in IDOE leadership and the recent creation of the Outreach Division, the department is still identifying its turnaround theory of action. The general outline of the theory of action for school turnaround is:</p> <p>If we...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide set ambitious performance goals for schools; • Require schools to assess their performance and identify a limited number of improvement strategies; and • Monitor and provide schools with support for implementation... <p>Then...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools will make significant improvements. <p>The Outreach division is continuing to work on defining the theory of action.</p> | D |
| b. Is there an SEA-wide commitment to and coordination of a comprehensive, cohesive set of SEA activities to support turnaround? | <p>The school, district, and IDOE leaders we interviewed reported that there is little coordination across IDOE departments to support turnaround. They reported that work is siloed across the agency which results in inconsistent messages to schools and districts from various departments within the agency.</p> <p>The school administrators reported that their Outreach Coordinators serve as liaisons to other departments within IDOE.</p> | NI |
| c. How do the actions of the SEA lead to changes in instructional practice in turnaround schools? What is the system for moving change from SEA [to region] to district to school to classroom? | <p>The department is relies on the school quality reviews, student achievement plans, a summative monitoring rubric, and support provided by Outreach Coordinators to identify the improvements needed to impact instructional practice in focus and priority schools. IDOE has no single solution for improving instruction in turnaround schools. School and district staff we interviewed reported that the structure provided by IDOE helps to identify and sustain focused attention and resources on the most critical needs of the school. Outreach coordinators provide professional development for school staff based on the needs identified in monitoring visits and school quality reviews for 4th year Focus schools.</p> | D |

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| <p>d. How does the SEA determine root causes of school under-performance and match appropriate state and/or external supports?</p> | <p>Every Focus and Priority school must develop a Student Achievement Plan (SAP).</p> <p>Every outreach coordinator conducts at least two monitoring visits to Priority schools and at least one monitoring visit to every Focus school in his or her region. The monitoring visits include two days of classroom observations and interviews with teachers and school leaders, Following the visits, the outreach coordinators complete the Summative Monitoring Rubric which reports on progress and makes recommendations for improvement based on the Eight Turnaround Principles.</p> <p>For schools in their 4th year of priority status a team of educators led by Teresa Brown conducts a school quality review, which also focuses on the Eight Turnaround Principles, identifies root causes of underperformance. The report is based on the review team’s review of data, focus groups and walkthroughs. The school quality review process begins and ends with a conversation with the building principal.</p> | <p>P</p> |
| <p>e. What is the nature of the school improvement plan?</p> | <p>The SAP template is very prescriptive requiring identification of at least 3 Priority areas for improvement, a description of the problem in each Priority area, identification of the root cause of the problem, SMART goals, and intervention/action strategies for each of the 8 turnaround principals. The SAP also identifies who is responsible, a timeline, evidence of progress and status update times for each strategy/intervention. School and district staff we interviewed said that the SAP is a useful tool for organizing and tracking their work.</p> | <p>P</p> |
| <p>f. How is the SEA learning from both school turnaround successes and failures?</p> | <p>To date, IDOE has been relying on outreach coordinators to identify lessons from turnaround success and failure. IDOE staff reported that the coordinators meet regularly to discuss school progress, or lack thereof, does problem-solving together. During the next year the department should consider developing a more formal process for tracking learning from schools and districts.</p> | <p>D</p> |
| <p>OVERALL RATING</p> | <p>Given that the current Outreach team has only been in place for a few months, the agency’s turnaround strategies, systems and processes for supporting turnaround are surprisingly robust. Over the next year the department should be working to fine tune the processes to ensure that they are helping schools to improve and creating proof points demonstrating that turnaround is possible with available resources.</p> | <p>D</p> |

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| 3. Organizational Structure: Design a structure that empowers a unit of state government with the capacity to turn around schools. | | |
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| Guiding Questions | Evidence & Analysis | Summary |
| a. Are respective SEA and district roles and responsibilities for school turnaround clearly understood within the SEA and in school districts? | <p>While IDOE outreach coordinators provide assistance to schools, everyone we spoke with understood that school and district staff is responsible for the success of turnaround. Everyone understood that IDOE provides monitoring and support.</p> <p>In the schools that have been taken over by the state and assigned external partners, the district has no responsibility for the success of the school during the 4 year term of the contract. The one external partner we spoke with said that it is not clear what will happen when the contract ends.</p> | P |
| b. Does the SEA provide resources and incentives for the development of turnaround partners , both external Lead Partners and internal district turnaround offices, to support districts and schools with expertise and capacity? | <p>The State Board of Education has recommended the use of external partners to operate persistently failing schools. Five such partnerships are in place (e.g., Edison at Roosevelt HS in Gary). Neither the Board nor the IDOE is recruiting or developing new external partners.</p> <p>The State Board and IDOE should assess the success of the existing external partners and determine whether there will be a need for external partners to takeover persistently failing schools in the future., If they determine that a need exists, they should begin working to create conditions and identify funding that will make it possible to recruit the best partners available. IDOE should also continue to encourage districts to develop internal capacity to support turnaround.</p> | NI |
| OVERALL RATING | While the initial work of the outreach coordinators received positive reviews from the school and district leaders we talked with, there are a large number of outreach coordinators and schools for them to support. Continued attention to preparing and supporting the outreach coordinators will help to ensure that roles remain clear. Clarifying the role of external and internal turnaround partners should also be a priority. | D |
| 4. Communications: Design a coherent agency- wide turnaround message and communicate it consistently. | | |
| Guiding Questions | Evidence & Analysis | Summary |
| a. Do school and district leaders understand the SEA turnaround strategy ? | School and district leaders we spoke with understand that the IDOE turnaround strategy is evolving. They articulated that the strategy will focus on setting ambitious goals, a strong diagnostic process, robust planning, and supportive monitoring by outreach coordinators. | D |
| b. Has the SEA effectively communicated with and engaged parents and community stakeholders about school turnaround? | The IDOE has not communicated directly with parents and community stakeholders about school turnaround. IDOE staff reported that they have been building relationships with organizations that can support turnaround efforts in schools. The impact of those relationships was not clear from our interviews. | D |

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| <p>c. Does the SEA have an effective system for sharing turnaround lessons learned across schools and districts? Does the SEA support cross-district professional learning communities to build the capacity of educators in turnaround schools?</p> | <p>The IDOE does not have a system for sharing turnaround lessons learned across schools and districts. There are not cross-district professional learning communities focused on turnaround.</p> | <p>NI</p> |
| <p>OVERALL RATING</p> | <p>While school and district staff seems to understand and support the new IDOE turnaround strategy, communication with all stakeholders should continue to be a priority. Establishing processes for identifying and sharing turnaround lessons should also receive greater attention now that structures for monitoring and support are in place.</p> | <p>D</p> |
| <p>5. Resources: Focus time, energy, and funds where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact.</p> | | |
| <p>Guiding Questions</p> | <p>Evidence & Analysis</p> | <p>Summary</p> |
| <p>a. Does the SEA allocate turnaround resources based on district and school commitment and capacity to reach ambitious performance goals?</p> | <p>In the past, SIG 1003(g) grants were awarded competitively for between \$1 and \$2 million per year. Schools identify either the transformation or turnaround model. This year, the application was redesigned to include a sustainability plan, climate and culture goals, and academic goal. The IDOE provides on-site technical assistance in writing the grant, along with webinars. There is also a review, and schools with an 80% or higher score get a follow-up review. This brings the pool of applicants down to those who have the most rigorous, yet achievable, plans. The largest 3 year grant is \$2 million, which is smaller than in the past, because the department is pushing the schools to use the money they have most effectively before bringing further funding into the mix.</p> <p>The next SIG cohort will still compete for the grants, but the grants will be for smaller amounts. In our interviews we were told that there were few applicants for the new grants.</p> <p>The 1003(a) grants were based on school rankings, and were smaller, ranging from \$25,000 to \$1.5 million, with no guidelines for amount yet decided. Schools in turnaround under state takeover also receive 1003(a) dollars to support those turnaround efforts and capacity building.</p> | <p>D</p> |

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| b. Does the SEA provide LEAs and schools with useful technical assistance to support turnaround? | The school leaders we talked with reported that IDOE provides schools with useful technical assistance, particularly professional development and webinars related to grants. The outreach coordinators are responsible for identifying school needs. There is not a menu of supports available from all of the outreach coordinators. In many cases what schools receive depends on the skills and resources of the particular outreach coordinator. | D |
| c. Does every turnaround school establish and regularly report to stakeholders on a limited number of performance targets that include measures of both fidelity of implementation and student outcomes? | Under state law, all Priority schools are required to conduct public hearings informing stakeholders that they have received a grade of F, describing the improvement plan, and providing an opportunity for comments and suggestions. There is no requirement or model for Priority and Focus schools to report to stakeholders on school performance, although SIG schools are required to report to their communities. Assistant Superintendent Teresa Brown reported that outreach coordinators attend school-sponsored community meetings. | NI |
| d. Does the SEA provide incentives to encourage turnaround in community-based clusters of schools ? | Establishing community-based clusters of turnaround schools is not an IDOE priority. | NI |
| OVERALL RATING | The IDOE uses a competitive process to award state resource funding, focusing on school goals and ability to use funding effectively and thoughtfully. Schools receive technical assistance around state grant applications, and from outreach coordinators based on specific needs. There is no IDOE process for Priority or Focus schools to report to stakeholders on school performance. Community-based clusters of turnaround schools are not a priority for IDOE. | D |
| 6. Accountability: Develop an accountability system that sets clear standards and performance targets for schools, LEAs and the SEA, monitors and reports on progress, and incentivizes dramatic reform. | | |
| Guiding Questions | Evidence & Analysis | Summary |
| a. Does the SEA have a clear and transparent process and criteria for identifying schools in need of turnaround? | The process for identifying schools in need of turnaround is clear and transparent. All individuals interviewed in this diagnostic review understood the process. | P |

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| <p>b. Does the SEA have an accountability system that sets clear expectations, monitors progress, and provides incentives for turnaround?</p> | <p>The accountability system rates schools on an A-F scale. Schools that receive two D's in a row or have been an F for one year are classified as Priority schools. Schools that are in the first year of a D grade are Focus schools. The grading system takes various measures into account, including performance on Math and E/LA, student growth, and indicators around college and career readiness (for high schools).</p> <p>IDOE monitors performance through twice per year visits from Outreach Coordinators to Focus and Priority schools. Schools also submit regular accountability reports tracking progress toward goals, aligned to the Turnaround Principles.</p> <p>Several school and district leaders questioned the way that student growth is calculated in the accountability system—based on the student's relative growth compared with a group of students with the same score rather than the individual student's year to year growth. In 2015 the state accountability system will change to place a greater weight on individual student growth.</p> | <p>P</p> |
| <p>c. Are there substantial consequences for both failure to implement improvement plans with fidelity and failure to improve student outcomes?</p> | <p>With support from IDOE, districts remove principals who are not able to implement the Turnaround Principles.</p> <p>The school and district leaders we talked with were not sure what would happen to a school that failed to improve. IDOE staff said that they are working with the State Board of Education on plans for persistently failing schools.</p> | <p>D</p> |
| <p>OVERALL RATING</p> | <p>The process for identifying schools in need of turnaround is clear and understood by school and district leaders interviewed in this review. The accountability system, an A-F grading scale, is also clear. There are policies in place for a district Superintendent to remove a building leader who does not align or adhere to the Turnaround Principles.</p> | <p>P</p> |

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| 7. Human Capital: Invest in highly effective teachers and leaders to drive turnaround at the district and school levels. | | |
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| Guiding Questions | Evidence & Analysis | Summary |
| a. Do state certification and licensing policies support efforts to place highly effective teachers and school leaders in turnaround schools? | Indiana licensing and certification policies are not an obstacle to placing highly-effective teachers and school leaders in turnaround schools. In fact, many interviewees praised the efficiency of the new certification system. | P |
| b. Does the SEA have effective partnerships with external organizations to provide high quality teachers and school leaders for turnaround schools? | Outside of a Teach for America partnership that impacts Indianapolis and Gary the state does not partner with external organizations to provide high-quality teachers and school leaders for turnaround schools. Some districts have partnerships with local businesses or universities but they do not focus on turnaround. | D |
| c. Are evaluation systems being used to ensure that students in turnaround schools have the best educators available? | Districts may modify the state’s RISE teacher evaluation system to meet local needs. While several of the school and district leaders we interviewed called the RISE system “unwieldy” and “cumbersome,” they agreed that it has helped remove ineffective teachers. | D |
| d. Does the SEA encourage and support the use of differentiated compensation to encourage effective educators to work in turnaround schools? | IDOE does not encourage differentiated compensation in Priority and Focus schools. The school leaders we interviewed were open to exploring the idea. One of the districts where we did interviews has a TIF program for all its schools. | D |
| e. Does the SEA have a strategy to recruit and develop district- and school-level turnaround leadership ? | IDOE does not have any partnerships or a clear strategy to recruit and develop district and school-level turnaround leadership. | NI |
| OVERALL RATING | State certification and licensing laws and policy do not get in the way of turnaround, but IDOE could probably help build more partnerships, state-wide or local, to develop and/or recruit strong leaders and teachers for turnaround schools. | D |

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Recommendations

The SDN will work to support Indiana as it identifies priorities and develops an action plan that will guide its work over the coming months. These action areas are presented only as suggestions for consideration, as the state must determine how to proceed.

1. **Build the capacity of outreach coordinators:** With over 200 Priority schools, IDOE needs effective outreach coordinators to support Priority and Focus schools. The department should continue to dedicate time and resources to defining a consistent outreach coordinator role and building the capacity of coordinators to fill the role. Determining “what’s loose and what’s tight” in the way that outreach coordinators relate to schools should be a priority. Identifying qualified outreach coordinators and providing the coordinators with opportunities to learn from each other should also be priorities.
2. **Develop and communicate a clear theory of action for school turnaround.** A theory of action that can be clearly articulated and understood by those at the state, district, and school levels will be beneficial to the IDOE, the schools, districts, and the public. A clear theory of action will also help to clarify expectations for district work on school improvement.
3. **Clarify, communicate, track and report on turnaround goals.** IDOE should set goals for the performance of turnaround schools, communicate the goals to the public, track progress on a quarterly basis, and regularly report on performance against those goals. For example: “20 of the 202 Priority schools will move out of Priority status in 2015 (move to A level), 100 will move out of Priority status by 2016 (C ratings in 2015 and 2016).” Following each round of monitoring, outreach coordinators should come together with department leadership to assess progress towards the goals.
4. **Develop turnaround teachers and leaders.** IDOE is uniquely positioned to facilitate the development of programs to develop teachers and leaders for turnaround schools. IDOE should work with outside organizations, e.g., TNTP, universities and districts to develop programs that prepare people to lead and teach in the highest need schools. A statewide or regional system recruit, develop, retain and allocate talent to the highest-need schools would be a major accelerant for school improvement.