

Assessing School and District Capacity for Transformation: Towards Smart Education Systems

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Presentation Goals

- Describe the historical and current political and technical context surrounding school and district transformation
- Describe and discuss strategies needed to strengthen the effectiveness of these efforts
- Discuss the importance of a smart capacity building approach to take reform to scale

AISR

- Mission: Share and act on knowledge that improves outcomes and conditions in urban schools
- Core Principles: Equity, Community, Results and Learning Matter
- Four Circles of Work: District Redesign & Leadership, Community Organizing & Engagement, Research & Policy, Communications and Technology
- Three Lines of Inquiry: College Readiness, Extended Learning, School Transformation

School transformation

The Historical Context



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Elementary and Secondary Education Act: The Early Years (1964 – 1988)

Emphasis placed on targeting support to subgroups of students through reliance on programs, services, and interventions

1970s – 80s: Shift from Programs to School-wide reform efforts:

Edmonds&Lezotte

Clear Mission

High Expectations for
Success

Instructional Leadership

Frequent Monitoring of
Student Success

Opportunity to Learn
and Student Time on
Task

Safe and Orderly
Environment

Home – School
Relations

1990s: Investment in Comprehensive School Reform Designs

- 1988 Reauthorization of Title I encourages school-wide focus in high poverty schools
- New American Schools Development Corporation (1991)
- Obey/Porter Legislation (1997)

Research on Ingredients of CSRD Success

Coordination of
Resources

Research-based
Strategies

Comprehensive Design
Professional
Development

Measurable Goals

School and Community
Support

Parent and Community
Involvement

External Support and
Technical Assistance

Evaluation Support

1980s–90s: Excellence Era Shifts Definition of “Equity” to Meeting Standards and Outcomes for All

- Improving America’s Schools Act (1994)
 - Links ESEA to Goals 2000: Educate America Act
 - Adequate yearly progress tied to standards-based performance assessments
 - Charter schools as alternatives and innovation incubators
 - 8 National Goals

Schools are still failing:
Now what?

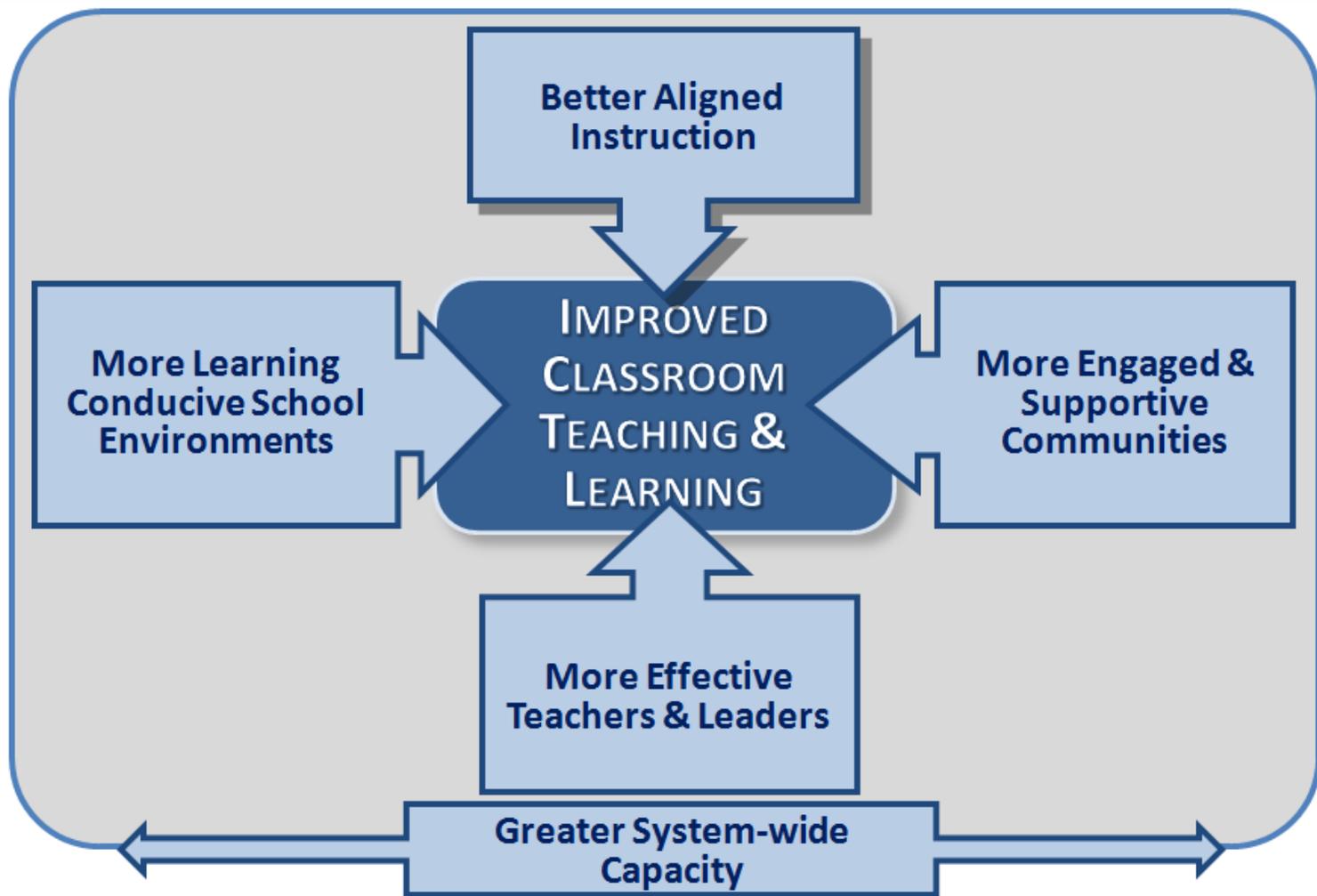


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To help achieve the President's 2020 goal, ED has focused much of its K-12 strategy on four key reform areas.

 <p>Implement college- and career-ready standards</p>	 <p>Recruit, retain, and support effective teachers and leaders</p>
 <p>Build robust data systems that track student progress and improve practice</p>	 <p>Improve student learning and achievement in our lowest-performing schools</p>

Improving classroom teaching and learning is at the center of ED's K-12 and turnaround strategy.



Recent National Critiques

- Failure to narrow achievement gaps also due to lack of attention to broader social and economic factors
- School and district reform models pay little attention to political, social, and cultural dimensions of reform that reside inside and outside the school/district/state
- Lack of capacity at state, and district levels often ignored

Fixing Low-Performing Schools and Districts: Cause for Concern

- Comprehensive interventions imposed on schools and communities
- Emphasis on governance, leadership, and staffing, less on instructional change
- Burden for failure placed entirely on school
- Ignores need for collaboration, ownership and district/system supports
- Weak support for ELL, Special Education, and Gap Closing

Robert Balfanz: Experience and Research call for a More Analytic Approach

Schools do not succeed when their
educational challenge exceeds the available
human resources that are wisely and
diligently applied

Robert Balfanz: Three Parts to a School's Educational Challenge

- **Academic Challenge** - How many students enter the school behind grade level or without expected foundational skills or knowledge?
- **Engagement Challenge** - How many students enter the school having already been chronically absent, in behavioral trouble, or having failed a course because they did not turn in their work?
- **Poverty Challenge** - How many students enter school having experienced prolonged exposure to poverty, violence, homelessness, agency involvement, and/or lack of stable access to basic needs?

Meeting the 3 Challenges

Beat the Odds Study (New York), AISR (2007)

- Academic Rigor
- Networks of Timely Support
- College Expectations and Access
- Effective Use of Data
- A Better Distribution of Resources
- Great Control Over Enrollments
- A Stronger System of Support and Accountability

Framework of Essential Supports:

Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppecsu, Easton

- Professional Capacity
 - School Learning Climate
 - Parent, School/Community Ties
 - Instructional Guidance
-

Three Components of School Leadership:
Inclusive, Instructional, Facilitative

- Schools in Communities with Social and Cultural Capital

From At-Risk to On-Track: Lessons from Philadelphia, PCCY (2008)

- Sustained Effective Leadership
- High Expectations for Success
- A Climate of Trust, Pride, Respect and Collaboration
- Strong Instructional Programs
- High Attendance and Stability
- Use of Data to Improve Student Achievement
- On-going professional development
- Outside Partnerships and Parental Involvement

Implications for School/System Review and Transformation?



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Why Do Most District and State Efforts Fall Short?

- Many initiatives, often poorly coordinated.
- Fads or trends dominate evidence.
- Weak mechanisms for organizational learning.
- Weak implementation support.
- Lack of attention to content.
- Lack of continuity and persistence.
- Conflicting and unclear goals.
- Improvement as a Zero/Sum enterprise.

Why Districts and States Must Be Redesigned

- **Weak or Antiquated Systems:**
 - **Human resources**
 - **Fiscal management**
 - **Knowledge management**
 - **Student enrollment and assignment**
 - **Educator Preparation**
 - **Facilities design, construction, maintenance**
 - **Communication and public engagement**
- **Changing governance, leadership and increasing local control not sufficient alone.**

New Vision of District

- Smart Districts—Key Functions:
 - Needed supports and timely interventions
 - Ensures that schools have the power and resources to make good decisions
 - Measures results for equity and excellence and holds people accountable at all levels using leading and lagging indicators
 - Ensures equitable distribution of meaningful community supports

New Vision of Schools: Opportunity by Design—Carnegie Corporation

- Clear mission, coherent culture
- Integrates positive youth engagement
- Mastery of rigorous standards
- Personalizes student learning
- Empowers & supports students
- Effective human capital strategy
- Continuously improves model and operations
- Develops and deploys collective strengths
- Manages school operations effectively & efficiently
- Porous & connected

Components of School/System Review: Implications

WHO

- Students & Parents
- Teachers & School Leaders (Specialists and Support Staff?)
- Central Office?
- Partner Organizations?
- Higher Ed, others?

WHAT

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations
- Data & Research Analyses
- Access to exemplars locally and beyond.

Review Process and Team Composition

Diverse perspectives needed: School, Central Office, School Board, Parent, Partners, Community, State

Reciprocal accountability requires layered review (school, district/system/community)

Smart Districts

Smart Education Systems

Reform as a technical, political, social and cultural endeavor

Smart Education Systems also Matter

- Multiple Cross-Sector Partnerships
- Focused on a Broad Set of Academic and Developmental Outcomes
- Community and Family Centered
- Fosters Shared Accountability
- Systemic Approach for Bringing Work to Scale
- Strategies that Address Power Differentials

Additional Resources

- Annenberg Institute:
 - <http://annenberginstitute.org/>
- Everyone Graduates Center:
 - <http://www.every1graduates.org/>
- ConnectEd California-Linked Learning School Model:
 - http://www.connectedcalifornia.org/linked_learning
- Generation Schools:
 - <http://www.generationschools.org/>
- Carnegie Corporation, Opportunity by Design
 - http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Programs/Opportunity_by_design/Opportunity_By_Design_FINAL.pdf