

Level 4 Schools Guidance: Local Stakeholder Groups

Upon designation as a Level 4 school, state law requires that the district and school develop a Turnaround Plan for accelerated improvement within three years and outlines a timeline and process accordingly. The first step in this process is to convene a local stakeholder group. The guidance below is designed to assist districts with building and utilizing their local stakeholder groups and offers suggestions to leaders on creating school redesign teams to implement turnaround efforts.

Local Stakeholder Group- Overview of Functions

As stipulated in *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap*, the purpose of convening a local stakeholder group is to provide recommendations to the superintendent regarding the overarching strategies and approaches to be included in each Turnaround Plan. The law is clear about the size, composition, and timing of the local stakeholder group, but leaves discretion to the superintendent about the organization of the group's work and its ongoing role throughout the life of the school turnaround plan. The following is a synopsis of the law's requirements for the local stakeholder group and suggestions for how a district might implement this requirement.

Requirements for Convening a Local Stakeholder Group

Within 30 Days of a school being designated as underperforming, the superintendent shall convene a local stakeholder group of not more than 13 individuals to solicit recommendations on a Turnaround Plan.

The group shall meet publicly and include:

1. ESE designee
2. School committee chair/designee
3. Union president/designee
4. Administrator from the school (superintendent choice)
5. Teacher from the school (faculty choice)
6. Parent from the school (parent association)
7. Social service, health and child welfare agencies representatives (superintendent choice)
8. As appropriate, representatives of workforce development agencies (superintendent choice)
9. EEC rep or DHE rep (EEC commissioner or secretary or secretary of education choice)
10. Community member (chief executive of town choice)

Within 45 days of its initial meeting, the stakeholder group shall make its recommendations to the superintendent. The superintendent "shall provide due consideration to the recommendations".

State law requires that Turnaround Plans include steps to address issues related to student performance and set measurable annual goals for student and school performance. State law also provides districts with additional flexibility and authority to make changes necessary to promote rapid improvement. The local stakeholder group is responsible for providing recommendations related to these three key areas described here and included in the **Turnaround Plan Instructions and Template guidance**.

1. Required steps in 6 areas: address achievement gaps; alternative ELL programs; financial plan for the school; address social service and health needs; improve or expand child welfare services and law enforcement; improve workforce development services

2. Measurable annual goals: annual targets in 13 required areas including student achievement, attainment rates, college/career ready measures, and school culture
3. Authorities necessary to promote rapid improvement: the law lists 16 authorities that can be outlined in the plan (e.g., changes to curriculum, budgets, staff compensation, collective bargaining, district and school policies, professional development, etc.)

Suggestions for Organizing and Convening a Local Stakeholder Group

Set Clear Expectations regarding Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

The local stakeholder group is not charged with implementing each school's plan, but rather providing recommendations for the content of the plan. The local stakeholder group has an important role to play in kicking off the turnaround effort, particularly in the following 3 ways:

1. **Ensure that the turnaround plan process is data-driven, community-based, and participatory** – the local stakeholder group can help ensure that the development of the plan involves meaningful participation from key school, district, and community stakeholders, each of whom is using data and individual expertise to contribute to the decision making process.
2. **Strive to make recommendations so that the turnaround plan reflects the perspectives of the stakeholders, is rigorous and research-based, and is likely to meet the needs of students and families in that school community** – the local stakeholder group should provide recommendations that reflect the urgency to make dramatic changes as needed to improve student achievement, but that are actionable and can be planned for and implemented by the school-level redesign team.
3. **Ensure that the turnaround plan can be fully supported by the many constituents who must usher the plan forward** – each member of the local stakeholder group, chosen to represent a key school/district constituency, has an opportunity to help the superintendent build support for the school's turnaround efforts. As such, members have a role to play in communicating the recommendations of the stakeholder group in a positive and forward-looking manner to their constituents.

Provide Stakeholders with Information about the Level 4 work

In addition to providing stakeholders with data on district and school performance and providing a setting in which stakeholders have an opportunity to share their understanding of issues, it is important that local stakeholder group members have information related to the state law, the requirements of the Turnaround Plan, and the relationship between the Turnaround Plan and the federal School Redesign Grant program. In order to keep the local stakeholder group's conversations focused and targeted, ESE recommends that participants of the local stakeholder groups consider the following:

- The School Redesign Grant (SRG) program is a source of federal funding for Level 4 schools; however, the SRG program is administered on a competitive basis – it is not an entitlement. Therefore, turnaround plans should be focused on altering structures and conditions in a way that does not rely on additional funds, but reallocates existing funds. **The Turnaround Plan must be possible with current funds and accelerated and/or enhanced with federal funds.**
- In the event that the district does apply for federal SRG funding, the content of the funding requests in the SRG proposal must supplement rather than supplant district funding. The content should be considered an investment in school capacity because participants need to consider the long-term sustainability of proposed efforts must be considered. **The federal SRG**

funding can only be used for up to five years – then the district is responsible for maintaining the improvements in that school without the additional funding source.

- Changes to collective bargaining contracts must be negotiated between management and unions – **but stakeholder recommendations need not be limited to existing collective bargaining contract provisions.**
- School-level recommendations should take into account district policies and may also call for changes in district policies and practices.
- Individual stakeholder members should be transparent with the group in acknowledging any potential conflicts of interest.

Organize the Local Stakeholder Group meeting(s) to maximize time and expertise

The requirement to convene a local stakeholder group provides a tremendous opportunity for the district to bring together leaders from the community and engage in a productive and forward thinking conversation. While recommendations are the formal outcome of the meeting(s), there are other outcomes, such as increased awareness of issues, networking and relationship building, and collective urgency, which may increase the likelihood that Level 4 turnaround efforts will be successful. Superintendents are encouraged to strategically consider how to organize the local stakeholder group meetings to fully access members' perspectives, skills, and resources.

The following two options for organizing local stakeholder group meetings are offered for consideration:

1. Convene weekly meetings focused on the Conditions for School Effectiveness

Use the 45 days to hold a series of 5 or 6 weekly meetings. Each meeting could be focused on one or more of the Conditions for School Effectiveness, which serves as a framework for thinking about school issues and crafting recommendations. Each meeting could include formal time for sharing of data (related to the Condition) and discussion of the data and other relevant information. Stakeholders would have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions about the data and work in large or small groups to identify the core issues exposed by the data and potential recommendations for addressing the core issues. The time between meetings could be used to share potential recommendations with the school, as a way of gathering feedback and informing the recommendations.

At the end of the 45 days, the recommendations developed by the local stakeholder group could be presented to the full School Committee, as a way of demonstrating ownership and support for the recommendations.

2. Convene two meetings, focused on identifying core issues and generating recommendations

Use the 45 days to hold two facilitated half-day meetings. The purpose of the first meeting would be to provide a thorough orientation to the roles and expectations of the local stakeholder working group, followed by a facilitated "deep dive" into school data and additional information. The data exploration could be organized according to the Conditions for School Effectiveness or by another framework used by the district (e.g., an existing district or school improvement framework.) Stakeholders would leave the first meeting with a solid baseline understanding of where the school is and a set of preliminary core issues, generated during the meeting, that are impacting student performance.

Between meetings, members would be asked to share the emerging themes and data with their own constituents, looking to obtain additional information. The second half-day meeting would be

focused on generating specific recommendations to provide to the Superintendent or to the School Committee.

Transitioning to and Organizing a School Redesign Team to Implement Turnaround Plans

The ongoing, school-based work required to implement the Turnaround Plan and make necessary adjustments and refinements along the way is likely to require on-going leadership from a school-based team of administrators, teachers, parents, and possibly students. ESE is recommending that districts consider supporting a “*school-level redesign team*” at each Level 4 school led by the principal and charged with leading school turnaround efforts.

The work of the local stakeholder group will directly inform how school leadership goes about developed detailed actions plans for implementing the Turnaround Plan. The table on the following page, *Relationship between the Local Stakeholder Group and School-Level Redesign Team*, is intended to clarify the relationship between these two planning groups and the different roles that they play. Additional guidance on redesign team actions and planning suggestions is included in a separate guidance document.

Relationship between the Local Stakeholder Group and School-Level Redesign Team

Local Stakeholder Group (LSG)	Redesign Team (RDT)
Origins —State law (See <i>Summary of Process for Developing and Submitting a Level 4 Turnaround Plan</i>)	Origins – ESE recommendation
Tenure – Limited. Specified by state law as 45 days (see timeline on page 2) <i>Districts and/or schools may opt to reconvene the local stakeholder group as an advisory group at various times throughout the three-year process.</i>	Tenure – Ongoing throughout the school’s status as Level 4.
Membership —Maximum of 13 members from prescribed roles defined by law,	Membership —At Superintendent’s discretion; led by principal
Representing —Constituency groups (ex., WIB, EEC, Higher Ed), district and school representatives, parents	Representing —School; recommended to be comprised of +/-50% school staff, with union site leaders present; district representative optional; led by Principal
Work Commitment —Finite meeting commitments: Convening one or more times within 30 days of school’s designation as Level 4, and making recommendations to the Superintendent 45 days later	Work Commitment —Frequent meetings and ongoing engagement to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build the redesign plan • provide oversight of the plan’s implementation • evaluate the plan’s efficacy • revise plan and implementation as needed
Purpose and Expectations— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ensure Stakeholder Representation</u>: Members of the local stakeholder group are expected to participate in a data-driven process that ensures that the expertise and perspectives of key school and community stakeholders inform the development of recommendations. • <u>Ensure Accountability and Urgency</u>: The local stakeholder group is expected to ensure that the proposed recommendations reflect the urgency to make changes and receive the full support of the community. • <u>Ensure Broad Communication</u>: Local stakeholder group members are expected to ensure that the perspective of their constituency is heard and that proposed recommendations are communicated back to their constituency. 	Purpose and Expectations— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use knowledge of past barriers and root causes of problems to develop specific action steps for implementing strategies in the Turnaround Plan; • Bring the priorities described in the Turnaround Plan “alive” by framing the priorities as part of coherent vision for the school, articulating where the school will be in three years as a result of turnaround efforts; • Build on the state turnaround plan to create an actionable redesign plan that is fully understood and supported by staff and students throughout the school; and • Guide implementation of the redesign plan and make adjustments as necessary.
Use of Data —Use of summative measures, focusing on why the school has been low-performing and how the school compares to other like-schools in the district and across the Commonwealth. Data may be used to illustrate the critical nature of the issues and the long-term impact on students’ lifelong opportunities	Use of Data —May involve a more fine-grained analysis of student performance, by grade, subjects and across teachers. Data may include observational, and perceptual data and contribute to deep causal analysis; commitment to communicate the results of the analysis to others and apply new insights to revisions of the plan and/or its implementation
Level of Recommendations —“Balcony-level” or policy related recommendations that leverage the flexibility afforded in the law; recommendations for changes that may not be feasible without the support of the Local Stakeholder Group. (LSG checklist on page 8 for details)	Level of Recommendations —Comprehensive, detailed recommendations on the refinement of strategies and action steps to address components of both the state Turnaround Plan <i>and</i> the federal school turnaround grant (see pg 10 for more details)

Local Stakeholder Group- Sample Checklist and Sign-Off for Recommendations

District: _____ School: _____ Date: _____

Notes:

- The Local Stakeholder Group may – but is not required to – offer recommendations on any of the following areas.
- The district may provide a template in which to capture any relevant recommendations.

Key Areas of Turnaround Plan	Recommendation Made?	
	Yes	No
6 State Requirements: a) Address achievement gaps (ELL, students with disabilities, low-income) b) Alternative ELL programs (“not withstanding chapter 71A”) c) Financial plan for the school d) Address social service and health needs (“ready to learn”) e) Improve or expand child welfare services and law enforcement (“safe and secure learning environment”) f) Improve workforce development services (“meaningful employment skills and opportunities”)		
Measurable annual goals that address: g) MCAS h) Progress in areas of academic underperformance i) Progress among subgroups j) Reduction of achievement gaps ----- k) Student promotion, graduation, and dropout rates l) Student attendance, dismissal, and exclusion rates ----- m) College readiness n) Developmentally appropriate child assessments (preK-3) o) Acquisition of 21st Century Skills p) Student safety and discipline q) Parent and family engagement r) Building a culture of academic success among students s) Building a culture of student support among school faculty and staff		
Authorities necessary to promote rapid movement (1) Expand, alter, or replace the curriculum (2) Reallocate existing budget (3) Provide additional district funds (up to per-pupil) (4) Differentiate compensation of school staff (bargained with union) (5) Expand school day and/or year (6) Add pre-K and full-day kindergarten (7) Require all staff to re-apply for employment (<i>see M.G.L. Ch 69, S. 1J, (d) for details on “bumping rights” collective bargaining agreement applies, except no bumping of teacher with professional teaching status “during a school year”</i>)		

Key Areas of Turnaround Plan	Recommendation Made?	
	Yes	No
<p>(8) Limit, suspend, or change collective bargaining agreements (as long as reduced pay is commensurate with reduced hours) <i>(see M.G.L. Ch. 69, S.1J (g) for details about the bargaining process: “good faith bargaining” completed within 30 days; ratification within 10 days ;unresolved issues submitted to ‘joint resolution committee appointed within 3 days; dispute heard within 10 days; ruling within 10 days; Commissioner resolves if JRC does not make ruling within 10 days)</i></p> <p>(9) Limit, suspend or change 1 or more school district policy or practice related to the school</p> <p>(10) Include job-embedded professional development with teacher input and feedback</p> <p>(11) Increase teacher planning time and collaboration focused on improving student instruction</p> <p>(12) Plan professional development for administrators that includes leadership skills and distributed leadership</p> <p>(13) Provide for a continuum of high-expertise teachers by aligning hiring, induction, evaluation, professional development, advancement, culture, and organizational structure</p> <p>(14) Search for and study best practices</p> <p>(15) Address mobility and transiency</p> <p>(16) Add components based on reasons for underperformance and recommendations of stakeholder group</p>		

Local Stakeholder Group Members	Affiliation (per state law)	Date
1.	ESE designee	
2.	School committee chair/designee	
3.	Union president/designee	
4.	Administrator from the school (superintendent choice)	
5.	Teacher from the school (faculty choice)	
6.	Parent from the school (parent association)	
7.	Representatives of social service, health and child welfare agencies (superintendent choice)	
8.	As appropriate, representatives of workforce development agencies (superintendent choice)	
9.	EEC rep or DHE rep (EEC commissioner or secretary of education choice)	
10.	Community member (chief executive of town choice)	
11.	Other:	
12.	Other:	
13.	Other:	