Guidance on Using a Redesign Team to Implement Turnaround Plans

What is the charge of the redesign team?

The redesign team uses the Superintendent's Turnaround Plan as the basis for a thoughtful and creative three-year redesign plan that will serve as the day-to-day road map for implementing the turnaround plan, leading to significantly improved student performance. A school's redesign plan will build from the Turnaround Plan that is required by state law and may also serve as the application for the federal school Redesign Grant.

The Turnaround Plan will set the key priorities and strategies for the school's plan and define the operational flexibilities and changes intended to set the stage for dramatic improvement. The school-level redesign plan, developed by school leaders and staff, will describe *how* the proposed strategies will be implemented in the school, taking into consideration the school's context and describing key action steps and implementation benchmarks that will guide turnaround efforts. The school redesign plan translates the Turnaround Plan into *action*.

The redesign team will focus on:

- Understanding the intent and components of the Superintendent's Turnaround Plan

- Analyzing more detailed, disaggregated data on student performance, stakeholder perceptions, and school and district conditions. This includes examining what has and has not worked well at the school and why.

- Proposing a detailed three-year redesign plan that builds from the Turnaround Plan proposed by the Superintendent and holds realistic promise for accelerating improvements in student achievement and school climate. *Whereas the Turnaround Plan described key priorities, school-level strategies, and changes in district policy intended to support turnaround plans, the Redesign Plan articulates specific actions for implementing school-level strategies.*

- Overseeing implementation of the redesign plan and making on-going adjustments based on data and emerging results, as needed. This work will be done in collaboration with ESE liaisons and supported by district departments.

What are the phases and projected timelines?

The redesign effort involves three over-lapping phases. In **Phase I, the school redesign team collects and analyzes baseline data and uses this data for strategic action planning.** The purpose of Phase I is to analyze data that will inform the development of a school redesign grant proposal and to make strategic decisions about how the school will implement proposed strategies. **Phase II focuses on the initial implementation of the school's Turnaround Plan**—focusing on early and quick "wins" and ensuring that the identified supports and changes needed to engage in rapid improvement are in place. **Phase III is about implementing planned strategies and actions**, emphasizing the importance of making mid-course corrections as needed to accelerate the implementation of changes and improving instruction. Ongoing data collection and analysis (Phase I) informs initial implementation (Phase II) and consideration of mid-course corrections (Phase III) to meet the goals of a successful redesign plan that improves student learning. Turnaround efforts are about "accelerating" the continuous improvement cycle, so that schools are engaged in accelerated improvement.

The following descriptions and timelines have been customized for the second cohort of L4 schools, identified in October 2011.

<u>Phase I – Baseline Data Collection and Action Planning (November 2011 to January 2012)</u>

District and school leaders are encouraged to initiate data collection and analysis as soon as possible. Extant data (e.g., MCAS data, district or school-level formative assessments, and surveys) can be collected and analyzed. ESE will provide each school with a "data packet" of relevant information intended to supplement data collected by the district and school.

Districts are also encouraged to consider using the Conditions for School Effectiveness self-assessment and learning walkthroughs as potential sources of data. Schools may also request and participate in a two-day *Site Visit Benchmarking Visit* that will provide the district and school with baseline information on the status of the school in reference to the Conditions for School Effectiveness.

Recommended data types and related data sources to inform Phase 1 analysis and planning:

- <u>Student achievement data</u>. MCAS and other available assessment data collected by the district, combined with the ESE Data Packet, can be used to inform analyses.

- <u>Demographic data on students and faculty</u>. Information related to changes in student population and students' language needs, teacher turnover rates for the school and by grade, and other demographic and contextual information should inform planning.

- <u>Organizational assessment data</u>. Perceptual data regarding the overall health of the organization, and in particular the culture and climate of the school related to professional learning, teacher expectations, and student aspirations such that relate to career and college readiness, may be collected through school and community surveys.

- <u>Observational data related to classroom practice and instruction.</u> Information collected through learning walkthroughs, site visits, or other opportunities to document classroom practice, should inform planning.

- <u>Data on school and district processes</u>. Information related to district and school support structures, such as how teachers are supported in using data or reflecting upon instructional practices, or how the district and school identifies to receive appropriate supplemental services and interventions, should inform planning.

<u>Phase II – Initial Implementation and Innovation (February to June, 2012)</u>

This initial implementation and innovation phase focuses on continued probing and use of data, and engaging in activities designed to remove obstacles that might hinder implementation. Building support for the planned turnaround effort through "quick wins" and broad-based participation in activities and planning are key aspects of phase II. Activities that the redesign team can use to support initial implementation include:

- Making visible changes to the school or making changes to the school schedule or policies that communicate that change is underway—a quick win.

- Engaging teachers and students in conversations around key elements of the school's turnaround plan, such as the priority areas for turnaround or particular strategies or programs that will be new to the school. For instance, the redesign team could share information on key aspects of the turnaround plan, such as tiered instruction, extended learning time, and teacher collaboration

- Sharing information with school staff, parents, and students about various components of the state law and data on the achievement gap, as a way of helping individuals understand the need to make changes.

Phase III – Ongoing Implementation and Expanded Innovation (January 2012 – 2015)

After the redesign plan is completed, the intensity of the subsequent work moves to full implementation and expanded innovation. Some members of the Phase I and Phase II redesign team may become part of the Phase III team, while other new members with skill sets appropriate to the redesign's implementation may be needed. During Phase III, the schedule and focus of the redesign team's work will focus on implementation and re-design as changes are needed. Further, the review of progress against established benchmarks will become a bigger part of the charge of the design team during Phase III.

Who is on the redesign team?

The school redesign team should be comprised of people who will be most affected by the anticipated changes in the school.   This is a serious undertaking. Team members should be informed of the intense nature of the work involved in school redesign and they should be willing to make the commitment to this process. This work will most likely need to involve after school, evening and weekend meetings to complete the redesign plan. Levels of enthusiasm may vary greatly. In some schools, there may be too many individuals who want to participate as redesign team members. In others, it may take more effort to create an effective team. Suggestions in this document assume the team will be collaborative and make consensus-based decisions (rather than voting).

Among the team members there should be individuals who are strong in areas of reading and math instruction, other key instructional areas (e.g. special education, English language learning), data analysis, technology, communication, community engagement, team building, and student services.

The size of the team should be relative to the size of the school. For example, a small elementary school may decide to have only 8 members. A secondary school may have 12-14 members. Groups larger than 20 members may be too large for the core team. Sub-committees may be needed as planning intensifies.

Note: in some schools, particularly those with a new principal, it may initially be difficult to identify members of a representative team. One way of assisting with this process could be to request that teachers—who are interested in this redesign opportunity—write a letter to introduce themselves, describe why they would be committed to this team and the success of the children who attend the school, and provide some suggestions they may have for the redesign of the school.

Suggested composition would include:

- Principal

    If the principal has not yet been chosen, an interim team leader should be chosen. This could be a well-respected teacher leader, central administrator or former school principal.

- Staff: At least 50% of the team should be teachers from the school.

    Teachers should be selected based on areas of particular strength/expertise. The principal may want to meet with the building or district union representative and a few other individuals during the teacher selection process.

- Parents: There should be 2-3 parents, depending on the size of the team.

- Community member (i.e., local store manager who really knows the community, not necessarily the president of a corporation)

- An individual from the central administration if desired.

    There are pro's and con's to central administrative membership on the redesign team. The central administrator should not be someone with line authority over the school or someone who might inhibit conversations. The individual could be a direct liaison to the district with the ability to identify district resources, cut through issues of "turf and jurisdiction," provide guidance on policy issues, and follow-up with district leaders on questions as they arise.

How will the redesign team function?

The team should make evidence-based decisions to determine the specific needs of the school. Data collection, assessment and analysis are all part of this effort. The team should examine what is working in the school, what is not working in the school, what direct changes the school can and should make, and what other changes it can and should influence on behalf of students.

The team needs to bear in mind that the plan should be a coherent redesign for significant and sustainable improvement at the school. As such, it is neither an amalgam of program initiatives nor an exercise in compliance. Instead, redesign provides an opportunity to come up with something different that will benefit students, school-site educators and the community.

The redesign team's use of evidence should involve:
- Examining multiple sources of data on student achievement
- Examining data on organizational conditions including observations of classroom practice, teacher use of data and collaboration practices, and student engagement and behavior
- Probing data sets to understand causal factors that affect the performance of the school in serving children
- Reviewing current programs, instructional strategies and related practices
- Examining additional data on the students and staff to ensure a thorough understanding of existing needs

The redesign team should be encouraged to be as creative as possible to explore the best opportunities for students. If a dynamic emerges within a district where the team's ideas are shot down, the process will become more frustrating and the students will suffer in the end.

Prior to beginning the redesign work, the team should understand the Turnaround Plan and be informed by the superintendent of:

- Any other predetermined decisions or parameters within which they must operate
    o Current state or district regulations
    o Necessary waivers or permissions from district policies or agreements
    o Is the process open-ended or are there certain non-negotiables, e.g.,
        ▪ Has the leadership structure been selected for specific reasons?
        ▪ Can the length of school day or school year be changed?
        ▪ Is the current after-school provider under contract?
- Requirements and reporting relationships
- Any known limitations
- Authority levels of the principal and the redesign team
- Predetermined timelines
- Budgetary guidelines and resources for both the planning and implementation periods
    o Limitations on uses of funds (i.e. School Turnaround Grant cannot be used toward building structure – bricks and mortar)

The group should identify priorities for issues, innovation and expected results (goals, vision, etc.) Operationally, the team should:

- Set a formal agenda for each meeting
- Establish the schedule for decisions that align with predetermined timelines.
- Identify who will fill the role(s) of writers
    o There are three needs for writing—writing of the redesign plan, communications to the community, and minutes/notes of the meetings.
- Refine and assess the "Quick Wins" being used to signify that something is truly going to be different in the school

Communication

A communication plan is important to help ensure a transparent and recursive decision-making process. A two-way communication plan between the redesign team and the larger school community (teachers, other school staff, parents, and students) provides the pathway for redesign ideas to be presented to school community members (including the Stakeholder Group), and for feedback to be received by the redesign team. This process needs to ensure accuracy in communication and build the constituency support necessary for the new direction and successful redesign of the school.

- Designating a point person specifically responsible for taking meeting notes and creating a newsletter – for email or updates on a website – is a good way to support effective communication.

Who will lead the team?

The principal is the leader and is accountable for quality and results of the process. The facilitator of the redesign team should be the principal, a teacher leader or possibly an outside facilitator. The facilitator should be someone who has

group work skills, credibility, and the ability to move a team towards the desired results in the context of a tight timeline.

If a school is undergoing a search for a new principal, the district may want to consider appointing a teacher leader, a respected retired principal or another respected educator to be interim leader of the redesign team.

What resources are available to the team?

The redesign team needs to be supported by the central administration as well as the greater community. While there will be members of the design team who are knowledgeable in specific content and process areas, the team will need to have access to additional experts and external resources in many other areas as possible redesign concepts are explored.

The central administration, in particular, can provide instructional support, professional development, leadership development, budgetary authority, communications support, etc. Most importantly, the central administration can provide something slightly less tangible but absolutely pivotal to the redesign effort. It can demonstrate it is open to and really listening to the creative ideas from the redesign teams, and is committed to providing support for the implementation of those ideas.

Redesign Team Selection Matrix - Sample

The matrix below can help a school assemble a Redesign Team with a strategic balance of skills and perspectives

Team Selection
1. The team needs to be cross-functional (play a wide range of roles) and possess a wide range of qualities such as visionary, collaborator, knows "the system", etc.
2. Make sure the "whole school" is represented.
3. The people represented should play a role in key content areas, initiatives, etc.
4. Consider who from the district should be on the team to ensure alignment between the school-based design team and the district leadership team.

Name & Title	Visionary-sees the big picture	Skilled Practitioner – demonstrated ability to help students and adults learn	Knows the Instructional Core & School Design	Relationship builder/ Collaborator/ Facilitator	Skilled Communicator	Project Manager	Speaks honestly and shares ideas	Makes things happen – Knows the system