

School Redesign Models

A GUIDE TO TURNAROUND

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School Redesign Fund (SRF)

The Texas Education Agency is committed to **relentlessly focusing on the students in low-performing schools.**

To this end, the School Redesign Fund (SRF) *aims to increase the number of students in highly rated campuses by supporting districts committed to transforming low-performing schools and creating better options for students.*

SRF provides competitive grant opportunities and technical assistance with the intent to empower and support districts with comprehensive and bold school redesign plans.

School Redesign Conditions

Exceptional applicants will present a strong plan for comprehensive and bold school redesigns. Each of the redesign options has advantages and drawbacks that districts should weigh given their own context and that of the schools they hope to improve. While rigorous evaluation shows that many efforts can improve student outcomes, no single approach is the clear “winner.”

All school redesigns require:

- The **will** to make changes to practice
- The **flexibility** to put in place more effective strategies
- The **capacity** to execute the turnaround plan
- The **community support** to sustain changes over time

All school redesign approaches hinge on good planning and implementation.

School Redesign Models

The Division of System Support and Innovation currently provides competitive grant funding and technical assistance to eligible schools developing and implementing one of the following school redesign models:

- 1. Restart** - Close the low-performing school and open a new school under a charter operator, charter management organization (CMO), or education management organization (EMO).
- 2. Turnaround** – Identify a new principal and engage in a comprehensive change in staff and instructional model.
- 3. Closure/Consolidation** – Close a low-performing school and subsequently enroll students in higher-rated school(s).

Turnaround Model

Overview: The district would identify a new principal and work with a school redesign partner to create a comprehensive change in staff and instructional model. A new school principal is defined as a candidate who either is a new hire or is a previous hire made within the past two academic school years. The implementation of the turnaround is phased-in one or several grades at a time until the whole campus has been replaced by the new model OR takes place across all grade levels at once and immediately replaces the original campus. A turnaround model should aim to enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend.

Goal: The goal is to create a new and improved learning environment that increases student and school performance.

Planning Timeline: Ideally, the district and selected school turnaround partner will engage in a thorough planning process for up to one year before implementation of a turnaround.

Governance: The district, through a contract, selects an SRP to lead the development and implementation of a comprehensive school redesign. The district maintains authority over management and staffing. A contract usually includes the SRP's process and performance expectations and the district's obligations related to operational flexibility.

Components of Turnaround

District Capacity

Extensive Community Engagement

Education Plan

Talent Plan

School Culture Plan

Evidence-based Interventions

Performance Management

Components of Turnaround

District Capacity – Districts needs dedicated, senior staff members who have knowledge of school turnaround implementation and experience overseeing contracts.

Guiding Questions –

- Who in the district can best serve as the district project manager? Does the district need to hire someone new?
- Is the district project manager well-positioned to effectively support and hold accountable the school principal?
- How might the school redesign partner enhance and supplement district capacity?

Components of Turnaround

Community Engagement - Districts leaders need to engage with families, students, educators, and community leaders to understand what they value and include those needs when recruiting and selecting a school turnaround partner.

Guiding Questions –

- What is the public criteria for the district selecting a campus for turnaround and how is that communicated?
- How will the district and new principal generate enthusiasm for a turnaround school with new supports?
- How will a SRP tailor implementation to the needs of the school community?
- How will families, students, educators, and community leaders have access to potential turnaround partners to learn about their programs?
- How are families, students, educators, and community leaders part of an advisory group that shapes relevant district and school decisions?
- How are families affected by a turnaround contacted by the district and made aware of their enrollment options?

Components of Turnaround

Education Plan – School redesign partners have varying ideas on how to improve academics. All turnaround models should raise expectations for students, increase the rigor and quality of instruction, and build strong school cultures.

Guiding Questions –

- Does the turnaround partner have a clear academic model (e.g. liberal arts, STEAM, credit-recovery, project-based, single-sex, dual-language)? What evidence supports this approach?
- Does the turnaround partner have a plan for phase-in or whole-school implementation? If phase in, are the management responsibilities for phase-out grades clear?
- Does the turnaround partner have a clear student assessment strategy?
- How is student data collected, updated, and used by teachers and principals?
- Is there clarity on how the turnaround partner will serve specific subpopulations well?

Components of Turnaround

Talent Plan – The district creates strategies to develop the strong people already at the campus and seeks new talent from a wide array of sources, including the best districts, charter schools, and training programs.

Guiding Questions –

- How will the district select a new leader, and what experience, training, and skills will the new leader be expected to possess? What is the school redesign partner's involvement?
- How will the district attract teachers from the strongest proven pipelines?
- What professional development opportunities exist for current teachers and staff?
- How will the district provide support to staff that are reassigned to other schools as a result of the redesign?

Components of Turnaround

School Culture Plan – All turnaround models should raise expectations for students, increase the rigor and quality of instruction, and build strong school cultures.

Guiding Questions –

- Does the school redesign partner have a clear approach to student culture (e.g. “high expectations”/highly-structured, “love and logic”/nurturing)? What evidence supports this approach?
- Has the school redesign partner articulated the core values of the schools?
- Does the school redesign partner have a plan for meeting the socio-emotional needs of students?
- How does the school redesign partners’ approach to student culture shape instructional practices?

Components of Turnaround

Evidenced-based Interventions – The turnaround model implements programs or strategies which have been tested and have demonstrated success in schools. Grant applicants must include at least one evidence-based intervention.

Guiding Questions –

- What is the plan for recruiting **better human capital** to the restart campus?
- How does the school reform partner set a school **culture of high expectations**?
- How will teachers increase students' **time on task** and use **data to alter the scope and sequence of classroom instruction**?
- What tools are available to support **student-level differentiation**?

Components of Turnaround

Performance Management – In a turnaround model, the district usually sets transparent process and performance measures for the school redesign partner in a contract.

Guiding Questions –

- What school and student performance expectations (e.g. student performance, student progress, school climate, student engagement, student equity/access), if any, will be contractually specified for the ESP?
- Is the district prepared to terminate the contract if support expectations are not met?
- How will the turnaround school's performance be a factor in other turnaround decisions?

Case Study P1: Achievement First partners with non-profit Transcend to create “Greenfield school model” and improve college completion rates

While 97 percent of Achievement First (AF) alums enrolled in college – an impressive matriculation rate – college completion rates were on track to be much lower – 30-50 percentage. Wanting to improve, AF leaders Dacia Toll and Doug McCurry engaged Aylon Samouha and Jeff Wetzler, co-founders of Transcend, a non-profit focused on accelerating innovation in school model design. The Transcend co-founders, drawing upon collectively decades of senior leadership in organizations such as Teach For America, Rocketship Schools, and Score! Education, started with the premise, “If you can build any school. . .” In fall 2015, after 70+ sessions with stakeholders, the new AF “Greenfield Model” piloted in kindergarten and in middle school grades 5 and 6 at AF’s Elm City College Preparatory in New Haven, CT. School leaders recruited AF and external teachers for the pilot grades.

HOW IT WORKS - The Greenfield School Design bases all decisions on the following three “design anchors” –

Accelerated Expectations – Students have **four modalities of learning** and spend far less time in large-group learning and far more time engaged in self-directed learning (approx. 2 hrs./day), small group learning (approx. 2 hrs./day), and expeditions outside of school (4-8 weeks/year). In large group learning, experienced educators lead students in seminars, debates, simulations, and scientific experimentation to explore deeper questions. Each subject is taught in the modes that school leaders believe maximize learning. Students participate in two enrichment activities each day (e.g. dance, martial arts, music, and STEM inventions).

Awesomely Powerful Community - Every student has her own **Dream Team** including parents, siblings, community members and one teacher (“Goal Coach”) to capitalize on all the love surrounding the student. Teams meet quarterly to share progress and goals. During the school day, students are organized into close-knit **Goal Teams** of 8-10 students with their **Goal Coach**. Each student has a peer **running partner** to provide support and accountability.

Ownership and personalization – The whole school design intentionally fosters six “habits of success:” Curiosity, Personal Growth, Empathy, Gratitude, Drive, and Teamwork. A **personalized learning platform** brings it all together enabling students to set goals, move through work, and communicate with staff and families.

Case Study P2: Achievement First partners with non-profit Transcend to create “Greenfield school model” and improve college completion rates

School Design - Year 1 Challenges/Lessons Learned – 1. Be ready to flex and problem-solve on the fly. The school schedule iterated multiple times throughout the year to make it better for students and staff. 2. Design matters, but only if accompanied by strong leadership. No one is doing a job that they have done before. Pace the change. 3. Especially in redesign models with increased student agency, clear expectations and strong classroom management from Day 1 really matter and even more so in older grades. 4. New school models require new measures, some longer term and not easily measured (e.g., habits of success, motivation, enrichment). This underscores the importance of multiple measures. 5. New school models need significant funding and human capacity dedicated to research and development.

EMERGING EVIDENCE OF GREENFIELD MODEL (2015-16) –

- In the **kindergarten pilot**, end-of-year reading scores exceeded AF’s ambitious goals of 90% proficient and 40% advanced levels. On the NWEA MAP test in the spring, nearly 60% of kindergarten students showed at least 75th percentile growth from the start of the year.
- In the **middle school pilot**, grade 5 and 6 ELA weekly quiz scores, in late spring, routinely ranked #1 or #2 in the AF Connecticut network. Grade 5 math exceeded the CT network average, although grade 6 math scores were below the average. Interventions were put in place.

Additional Resources

Achievement First/Transcend Case Study:

- [A Case Study of Achievement First's Greenfield Schools Year 1 Pilot](#)
- [Achievement First Greenfield School Design Phase 1](#)
- [Modifications to Charter: Elm City College Preparatory School](#)

National Turnaround Resources:

- [Atlanta Public Schools Turnaround Partners – sample partnership contracts](#)
- [ESSA and Early Childhood Education: Opportunities for State Leadership – Council of Chief State School Officers](#)
- [School Turnaround Learning Community – WestEd](#)
- [US DOE – Profiles of School Turnaround Sites in Selected Sites](#)
- [UVA School Turnaround Program](#)

For More Information

Grant Information

Please refer to the program guidelines and resources available on the [TEA Grants Opportunities Page](#).

School Redesign Resources

School redesign guides can be found on the [DSSI website](#). The program area will also use twitter to facilitate a shared collaboration on school redesign resources. Applicants may access and contribute resources via the hashtag - #schoolredesignTX.