

States as Laboratories for Reform

Education Commission of the States
December 2005

Early Learning Policy Options

- Learning standards
- Teacher quality standards
- Funding

Ensure learning standards are created, coordinated and aligned

- Aligned by grade
- Include five domains of readiness: physical/motor, social & emotional, approaches toward learning, cognitive development, language/literacy development

Ensure learning standards are created, coordinated and aligned

- Separate kindergarten standards: 12 states
- Standards focused on a broader K-3 framework: 6 states
- P-2 standards: 5 states
- K-4 standards: 1 state

Teacher Quality – Early Learning

- Recommend that states base quality standards, compensation on public school salary schedules and opportunities for professional development
- Most states don't require any degree or certification for early learning teachers
- Most kindergarten teachers hold a bachelor's degree
- Only 3 states require certification/training in early childhood education

Funding Options – Early Learning

- Fund all 3- and 4-year olds and full-day kindergarten for all 5-year-olds
- Fund targeted students in Pre-K and full- or half-day kindergarten for all
- Use “weights” in funding formula to support early learning

Using “weights”

- Strong incentives: Provide more funding for full-day than half-day, with weight of full day larger than the weight for 1st grade
- Moderate incentives: Weight for full-day kindergarten is equal to or greater than that provided for 1st grade

Options: Using Categoricals

- Categoricals: Targeted to groups such as students w/disabilities, at risk, English language learners; or particular services (transportation, computer, free/reduced lunch); or programs (full day K, small classes, arts education, etc.)
- Target funding to districts that have never offered full-day kindergarten
- Seven states use categorical funding programs for full-day kindergarten for at-risk students

Coordinate funding streams

- Significant kindergarten funding comes from Title 1 – targeted funding for low-income families
- Other sources: Head Start or Child Care and Development, local, state, employers, foundations, community-based organizations, TANF

State and Local Sources -- Options

- Property tax earmarks
- County special tax districts
- Local sales tax dedication
- Tobacco or beer tax allocations
- Employer impact fees
- Service fee (e.g., motor vehicle registration)
- Enterprise fees from state lotteries, sports

State and local sources (cont'd)

- Tobacco settlement funds
- Public/private ventures
- State-issued general obligation or tax-exempt bonds
- Parent fees
- Philanthropic contributions

State & Federal Tax Credits

- 27 states allow families to take a tax credit or deduction for early childhood care/education
- In 13 states, families that don't pay income taxes may receive a "refundable" credit (AR, CA, CO, HI, IA, LA, ME, MN, NE, NM, NY, OR, VT)
- DE, DC, ID, KS, KY, MD, MA, MT, NC, OH, OK, RI, SC, VA, DC offer nonrefundable credits or deductions

State & Local Funding Options

- Provide corporate tax credits for employee provided childcare (25 states do)
- Provide tax credits for business or individual contributions to child care industry
- Property tax abatements for local industries
- Voluntary income-tax check-off

Kindergarten

- In 1984, only NC required districts to offer full-day kindergarten
- Today, nine states do (AL, AR, GA, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, WV)

Parent Involvement

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Parent Involvement

- Often consists of activities that are easiest to measure:
 - Grants/awards for programs to encourage schools to involve parents or recognize those that already do
 - Encourage, urge, expect or direct employers to enable parents to attend activities such as parent/teacher conferences
 - Good, but could be better

Maryland Parent Advisory Council

- Goal: Generate big-picture ideas on how to improve working relationships between parents and school personnel

Maryland Parent Advisory Council Recommendations

Accountability

- Regularly assess effectiveness of parent/community involvement
- Provide support for satisfaction surveys and use results
- Create incentives for more effective communication

Maryland Parent Advisory Council Recommendations

Training

- State department should assess needs of districts and provide technical assistance, resources and mentoring
- Offer for-credit course in becoming “Family Involvement Specialist”
- Districts should provide or ensure training that addresses disabilities, family advocacy, cultural diversity, parent involvement & customer service skills

Maryland Parent Advisory Council Recommendations

Leadership:

- Include on the state board at least two parents who have children who attend public school

Partnership:

- Encourage districts to collaborate with community agencies to provide wellness centers, physical/mental health care, child care, etc.

Maryland Parent Advisory Council Recommendations

Communication

- Encourage districts to use a variety of methods, media and languages to inform parents about curriculum, programs and suggestions for improving achievement
- Have committee of parents review to ensure information is understandable

Florida Family & School Partnership (similar policy in SC)

- Enacted in 2003
- Designed to give parents specific information about children's progress and information about school choices and opportunities for involvement
- Established framework for strengthening partnerships with parents

Illinois

- Requires state board to provide information on its website about strategies parents can use to help kids with homework
- Requires the state to notify all districts about availability of this information

Iowa

- Schools must inform parents at least 2X per year of children's reading level in K-3 and apprise them of any intervention necessary
- Schools must provide parents with strategies to enable them to improve children's skills and suggest district resources available

Oklahoma and Utah

- Both states have policies that require parents to be included in development of reading plans for children not reading at grade level

Kansas & Washington

- Kansas grants parents the fundamental right to exercise primary control over the care and upbringing of their children
- Washington's Center for the Improvement of Learning serves as a clearinghouse for successful programs for educational improvement and parent involvement

Kentucky

- Prichard Committee established the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL)
- CIPL conducts institutes for parents – for expanded role in kids’ education, to motivate them to assume leadership roles and to increase understanding of state system of education

Kentucky (cont'd)

- School committees (on which parents are represented) are not simply advisory. They have the power to hire and fire the principal.

High Quality Learning Environments: Legislative Activity

High Quality Learning Environments

Tennessee Encourages districts to conduct an inspection and evaluation program, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program

- (1) Ensuring that an adequate amount of outdoor air is being supplied;
- (2) Testing for radon;
- (3) Separating students and staff from construction and renovation areas;
- (4) Reducing use of products that require ventilation during use; and
- (5) Maintaining relative humidity to an appropriate level during hot and humid summers.

Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities Program Act

- Includes an academic facilities master plan program;
- Custodial, maintenance, repair, and renovation manual;
- Public school academic facility manual; equipment manual; and an academic facilities distress program.

Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities Program Act

- Requires every local board to approve a ten-year district wide facilities master plan for approval by the division of public school academic facilities and transportation.

Arkansas Academic Facilities Funding Act

- Establishes the the Academic Facilities Immediate Repair Program to provide districts with state financial assistance for eligible repair projects based on the school district's academic facilities wealth index.
- Establishes the Academic Equipment Program to support the purchase of eligible academic equipment based on the school district's academic facilities wealth index.

Arkansas Academic Facilities Funding Act

- Requires formulas, to be updated annually, for determining the basic project cost per student for new facilities; additions and major improvements that improve the state of condition or efficiency to a condition or efficiency better than the facility's original condition of completeness or efficiency.
- Establishes legislative intent that districts explore collaboration with other districts in pooling equipment, facilities and transportation.

California School Accountability Report Cards must include:

- Information regarding the availability of sufficient textbooks and other instructional materials for each pupil
- Any needed maintenance of school facilities to ensure good repair
- The misassignments of teachers, including misassignments of English learner teachers
- The number of vacant teacher positions for the most recent 3-year period.

New Jersey Ergonomics in Education Study Commission

- To examine the types and levels of severity of injuries related to study environments and study practices
- Supports development of ergonomic design standards for current and future facilities
- Supports development of ergonomic education programs

Closing the Achievement Gap Initiatives

Kentucky S.B. 168 requires the state department to:

- Provide disaggregated test data to schools each fall
- Provide an “equity analysis” that identifies significant achievement gaps for schools and districts
- Review and approve plans of schools that do not meet achievement gap targets
- Provide technical assistance and professional development to teachers on closing the achievement gap

North Carolina recommendations of Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps

1. Reduce, then eliminate, the disproportionate number of minority students in special education
2. Promote, encourage and fund approaches that expose minority students to advanced content
3. Initiate a public information campaign
4. Require that each school prepare an action plan, keep records of parental involvement and make voluntary home visits

North Carolina recommendations of Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps

5. Design and fund professional development initiatives
6. Require veteran teachers to accept an 11-month contract once every four years
7. Create, fund and support special seminars for teacher education faculty
8. Require search committee for teacher preparation faculty to have required skills for teaching diverse students

North Carolina recommendations of Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps

9. Resolve the shortage of qualified classroom teachers
10. Add “closing the gap” component to accountability system
11. Commission a study of the history of education of American Indians and African Americans in North Carolina.

North Carolina: Addressing Disproportionate Placement of Minority Students

- Requires continuous monitoring of districts to identify problems related to the excessive assignment of minority students to special education. Districts must design a continuous improvement plan remedy the situation if necessary.
- Appointed the Committee on Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education to examine practices and to design activities and strategies to help school systems deal with issues in this area.

West Virginia

- Legislatively recognizes that mastery of the basic skills of reading, mathematics and English language arts is the foundation for all further learning, and that deficiencies in these skills become more difficult to overcome as a student progresses through school.
- Policy states that intensive instruction and early detection and intervention are more effective than other approaches such as grade retention, social promotion and referral for special services.

West Virginia

- Requires the state board to adopt rules to ensure reading, mathematics and English language arts are the only subjects required to be taught daily in kindergarten through 2nd grade, and instruction in other subjects is to be oriented to reinforce instruction in them.
- Requires the state board to determine strategies for early identification and intervention for students who show deficiencies in these subjects.

North Carolina: Project Bright IDEA

- Collaborative effort between the state department and Duke University
- Goal: To help elementary teachers identify minority and/or other students who would be eligible for academically intellectual gifted (AIG) programs

Technical Assistance:

The State Role

Districts could provide similar
assistance

Technical Assistance

States have systems in place to provide “scientifically based” technical assistance to schools identified for school improvement, corrective action and restructuring, and states have made LEAs aware of their technical assistance responsibilities to schools implementing improvement plans.

How States Are Doing

	March 2003	March 2004
Y	(5/10%)	(23/45%)
P	(42/82%)	(25/49%)
N	(4/8%)	(3/6%)
U	(0/0%)	(0/0%)

In March 2004, 23 states appeared to be on track to meet the Technical Assistance requirement, compared with five in March 2003.

Y	Appears to be on track
P	Appears to be partially on track
N	Does not appear to be on track
U	Unclear or data not available

Arkansas 3-Phase Program Will Focus On:

- Expanding the knowledge base and leadership skills of the principal
- Requiring the principal to apply strategies and collect evidence of improvement in student learning and school processes
- Requiring the principal to publicly demonstrate the ability and skills that lead to sustained academic improvement

Arkansas 3-Phase Program

- Administered by the Arkansas Leadership Academy
- Provides annual bonuses for qualified principals serving in schools in academic distress
- Bonuses highest for “master” principals serving in the highest-need schools – up to \$25,000 a year, with an additional \$15,000 after three years and another \$10,000 after five years.

Virginia

- Established program designed to develop a cadre of principals that specialize in turning around chronically troubled schools
- Will develop 10 specialists a year for two years
- Will focus on business and education strategies that have proved effective in turning around low-performing organizations

Virginia Governor Warner's Turnaround Specialists

- Each specialist will serve under contract as the principal of a low-performing school for a minimum of three years.
- Specialists will be eligible for incentives such as additional retirement benefits or deferred compensation.

Also in Virginia

- Established criteria for reading and math models or programs
- Published descriptions of programs that have been approved by the state board of education, along with instructional materials that have proved successful with low-achieving students.

The North Carolina state board is required to:

- Identify schools that successfully made AYP
- Study the instructional, administrative and fiscal practices and policies used by these schools
- Create assistance models based on these policies and practices, with the assistance of the schools of education in the state university system and the University of North Carolina Center for School Leadership Development

The North Carolina state board must:

- Provide technical assistance first to those districts with high concentrations of schools that are not meeting AYP
- Determine the number that can be served effectively in the first two years.

Tennessee

- Schools that are not making AYP receive intensive weekly services on site through the Tennessee Exemplary Educator Program
- Program targets schools with the greatest need to improve student achievement.

Tennessee

- Selects and provides training to a cadre of recently retired educators who work for the department as independent contractors
- These individuals begin working with a school once it has been identified by the state and put on notice that it is in need of improvement, and continue to work with the school until it makes AYP for two years.

Selected Tennessee educators:

- Model innovative teaching strategies
- Serve as mentors to principals and teachers
- Analyze student performance data
- Connect schools with professional development providers
- Build capacity for continuous improvement

Quality Assurance: the Delaware Department

- Commissions an annual independent survey to determine the level of satisfaction – school boards, school administrators, teachers, parent organizations and the business community – dependent on the department's services and policies

No Child Left Behind

Restructuring Options

School Restructuring

If schools fail to make *AYP* for five consecutive years, state laws must authorize districts to restructure those schools in one of the following ways:

- Reopen the school as a public charter school
- Replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's failure to make *AYP*
- Enter into a contract with an entity, such as a private management company, with a demonstrated record of effectiveness, to operate the school as a public school
- Turn the operation of the school over to the state education agency, if permitted under state law and agreed to by the state
- Any other major restructuring of the schools' governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms.

Restructuring

How States Are Doing

	March 2003	March 2004
Y	(32/63%)	(38/75%)
P	(0/0%)	(0/0%)
N	(19/37%)	(12/24%)
U	(0/0%)	(1/2%)

In March 2004, 38 states appeared to be on track to meet the School Restructuring requirement, compared with 32 in March 2003.

Y	Appears to be on track
P	Appears to be partially on track
N	Does not appear to be on track
U	Unclear or data not available

According to ECS research,

- 12 states have enacted policies addressing the closing and reopening of low-performing schools as charter schools.
- 27 states have enacted policies concerning the reconstitution of a low-performing school's staff.

According to ECS research:

- 14 states have enacted policies dealing with contracting with an entity to operate a low-performing school.
- 23 states have enacted policies regarding turning over the operation of a low-performing school to the state education agency
- 12 states have enacted policies addressing other major restructuring of a low-performing school's governance arrangement.

Missouri - If a school is found to be “academically deficient” after two educational audits, policies target both the school and board:

- (1) The local school board may suspend, after due process, the indefinite contracts of “contributing teachers”
- (2) The state commissioner of education may, on the recommendation of the second audit team, conduct a recall election of local school board members

Missouri (cont'd.)

- (3) the local school board may not grant tenure to any probationary teacher until one year after the “academically deficient” designation is lifted
- (4) the local school board may not issue new contracts or renew contracts to either the superintendent or the principal for a period of longer than one year.

Colorado Restructuring Provision

- Requires the state board to recommend that the school be converted to an independent charter school, unless the school makes a specific amount of improvement, in which case it is allowed to continue to operate under the improvement plan for another year.
- If school “unsatisfactory” after the second full year of its improvement plan, the state board must then seek proposals from contractors to manage the school.

Louisiana's Recovery School District:

The recovery school district may assume jurisdiction over a chronically low-performing school if any of the following conditions exist:

- A local school board fails to present a plan to reconstitute the failed school to the state board of education.
- A local school board presents a reconstitution plan that is unacceptable to the state board.

Louisiana (cont'd.)

- A local school board fails at any time to comply with the terms of the reconstitution plan approved by the state board.
- The school has been labeled an academically unacceptable school for four consecutive years.

Once the recovery school district has jurisdiction over a chronically low-performing school, it may turn the school into a charter school.

Proposal in Mass.

- An independent advocacy group (Mass Insight) has proposed that Massachusetts form a single, statewide district that would encompass the lowest performing schools (about 100?)

States Where Closing & Reopening as Charter Schools is required – or one option

- Twelve states have enacted policies addressing the closing and reopening of low-performing schools as charter schools.

Alaska, Delaware: Must use 1 of 5 ways (1 of which is charter option)

- If a school fails to meet the state's AYP requirements for five consecutive years, its district must **create a plan to restructure the school in one of the five ways outlined in NCLB.**
- If the school fails to make AYP again, the district must implement the restructuring plan at the beginning of the school year following the creation of the plan.

California

- **Permits the state superintendent to allow parents at certain low-performing schools – called “state-monitored schools” – to apply directly to the state board of education to establish a charter school at the existing school site.**
- **Also allows the state superintendent to reassign principals and other certificated employees at “state-monitored schools.”**

California (cont'd.)

- State policy forbids the state superintendent from taking any action against a principal if he or she has been at the school for one academic year or less.
- Allows the state superintendent to assign the management of a “state-monitored school” to a college, university, county office of education or other appropriate educational institution, excluding for-profit organizations.

California state policy:

- Details the qualifications that such entities must possess and details certain kinds of school district involvement that must be specified in the contract.
- Requires that the costs of the entity to manage the school be established in the contract and be paid by the school district.

California

state policy (cont'd.) :

- Requires the state department of education to allocate \$150 per pupil for purposes of improving the academic performance of these schools.
- Forbids the state superintendent from assuming management of a “state-monitored school,” but it does allow three other major restructuring efforts (next slide).

California's state policy:

- Allows the state superintendent to renegotiate a new collective-bargaining agreement at the expiration of the existing collective-bargaining agreement for a “state-monitored school.”
- Allows the state superintendent to “reorganize” a “state-monitored school.”
- Allows the state superintendent to place a trustee at a “state-monitored school” for a period not to exceed three years.

Georgia requires one or more of the following actions:

- Removal of school personnel on recommendation of the master or the school improvement team, including the principal and personnel whose performance has continued not to produce student achievement gains over a three-year period as a condition for continued receipt of state funds for administration

Georgia (cont'd.)

- Allow for the implementation of a state charter school through the designation by the state board of education
- Mandate the complete reconstitution of the school, removing all personnel, appointing a new principal and hiring all new staff. Existing staff may reapply for employment at the newly reconstituted school but shall not be rehired if their performance regarding student achievement has been negative for the past three years.

Georgia (cont'd.)

- Mandate that parents have the option to relocate their student to other public schools in the local school system to be chosen by the parents of the student with transportation costs borne by the system.
- Mandate a monitor, master or management team in the school -- paid for by the district.

From the Literature

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From *Policy Options for Interventions in Low-Performing Schools* (Rand 2005):

http://www.rand.org/pubs/rgs_dissertations/2005/RAND_RGSD187.pdf

Mild Interventions	
Identification	Public identification of failing schools. This serves to improve the monitoring of the schools by the parents and by the government, and is also intended to motivate the school or its community to respond to its poor performance.
Planning	Mandating that the school set up a plan for its improvement. This would typically include a needs assessment by the school (possibly with an outside consultant) and a description of specific steps that can be taken to address the identified shortcomings.

Rand report, cont'd.

Technical Assistance	Supplying low-performing schools with technical assistance from an experienced educator or a contracted consultant.
Professional Development	Providing training to the school's staff. The training is geared towards addressing the needs outlined in the school improvement plan.
Parent Involvement	Requiring increased parental involvement in the school. Given the initiative from the school or district/state, parents organize to assist in classroom activities, after-school opportunities, school management, or even in classes for themselves.

Rand Report – mild interventions, cont'd.

Tutoring	Providing supplemental tutoring for students. Tutoring services are provided after school, before school, or on Saturdays to the children most at risk of failing state tests, or as an option to the whole student body.
Change of Financing	Provision of additional funds or withdrawal of funding. The change in funding for a school is a part of many other interventions listed here (also moderate and strong interventions), but may be an isolated intervention as well.

Professional Development	Providing training to the school's staff. The training is geared towards addressing the needs outlined in the school improvement plan.
Parent Involvement	Requiring increased parental involvement in the school. Given the initiative from the school or district/state, parents organize to assist in classroom activities, after-school opportunities, school management, or even in classes for themselves.
Tutoring	Providing supplemental tutoring for students. Tutoring services are provided after school, before school, or on Saturdays to the children most at risk of failing state tests, or as an option to the whole student body.
Change of Financing	Provision of additional funds or withdrawal of funding. The change in funding for a school is a part of many other interventions listed here (also moderate and strong interventions), but may be an isolated intervention as well.

Rand: Moderate Interventions

<p>Increasing Instructional Time</p>	<p>Adding more mandatory instruction by changing the schedule for certain students or the entire school.</p>
<p>Audits</p>	<p>Auditing the school with a team of outside experts for a comprehensive needs assessment -- implying that the school is unable to correctly identify its own shortcomings.</p>

Rand: Moderate Interventions

School-wide Action Plan / Comprehensive School Reform	Implementation of a plan for changing the processes or structures within the school. Such change may be driven by an Action Plan, a Comprehensive School Reform plan, or by the plan written by the Audit Team.
School Choice	Offering the students in failing schools the option to attend another, non-failing school. These interventions are often hampered by the availability of enrollment opportunities in neighboring schools.

Rand: Moderate Interventions

<p>Restriction of Autonomy</p>	<p>Reducing the authority of the principal over matters such as the budget, curriculum, after school activities, or other matters.</p>
<p>Change of Principal</p>	<p>Replacing the current principal with a new leader. The importance of leadership is widely documented in turning a declining school around (Berends et al., 2002; Brady, 2003; Connelly, 1999; ECS, 2002; McRobbie, 1998; Ziebarth, 2002), and such a step, while not involving any structural changes per se, can be a highly disruptive</p>

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intervention

From *Policy Options for Interventions in Low-Performing Schools* (Rand 2005):

<p>Strong Interventions</p>	
<p>Reconstitution</p>	<p>Removing and replacing all, or almost all of the school's staff and leadership. The existing staff is typically required to reapply for a position at the same school. The student body remains. Most of the school's operations are rebuilt from the ground up, such as the curriculum, as well as other structures and</p>
<p>School Takeover</p>	<p>Handing over the governance of the school to either an agency from the state department of education, or to an outside provider, such as a school management company. This may include staff changes similar to reconstitutions.</p>

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Strong Interventions (Rand 2005)

<p>School Closure</p>	<p>Closing the school's operation outright. All staff members are removed, and all students are assigned to other schools. The school may reopen after a few years, but not right away, and not in a form that resembles the old school. Closure is the strongest intervention possible.</p>
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From *Policy Options for Interventions in Failing Schools*, Connor P. Spreng (Rand 2005)

a) *The evidence of the interventions' impact is mixed throughout. Under the right circumstances, interventions of varying intensity and scope can be successful in having significant, positive impact on the performance of the school, as measured by student achievement, or measured qualitatively (school climate, student behavior, teacher expectations). Providing the right circumstances, however, is very hard to do.*

From: *Policy Options for Interventions in Failing Schools*, Connor P. Spreng (Rand 2005)

- b) *The two things that matter more than anything are (a) the capacity of the intervening body, and (b) the leadership in the school during or after the intervention.*

- c) *The balance between supporting the school and providing clear boundaries – and escalating sanctions if they are overstepped – is difficult, but crucial to get right.*

From: *Policy Options for Interventions in Failing Schools*, Connor P. Spreng (Rand 2005)

d) The criteria for the assessment should be legitimate and fair and should be seen as such by those who are affected by the interventions, in particular the teachers (i.e., validity and reliability should not be fundamentally questioned).

From: *Policy Options for Interventions in Failing Schools*, Connor P. Spreng (Rand 2005)

- e) *Management of expectations is key – at the school, at the district, and in the community. Results should be expected and demanded, but not right away.*
- f) *Strong interventions always have high political costs. The preference for avoiding them demands the careful and realistic design of an escalating schedule of interventions that, once it is in place, should be adhered to.*

From *School Improvement Under No Child Left Behind*,
Phyllis McClure, Center for American Progress, March 2005

- *Build state capacity to implement a repertoire of approaches to school improvement. States need a wide range of potential options for assisting schools, instead of being prompted to rely on the single approach—school support teams—favored by NCLB. In addition, states need some discretion in using more than just the 5 percent of the SIF designated for state-level support in order to ensure that they have the resources to adequately help schools carry out their improvement strategies.*

From *School Improvement Under No Child Left Behind*,
Phyllis McClure, Center for American Progress, March 2005

- *Focus school improvement efforts beyond the school level. Under NCLB, districts and schools bear front-line responsibility for school improvement. However, schools may not currently be equipped to play this role. District-level initiatives, such as leadership development of principals and central office administrators, should be considered a legitimate school improvement expense.*

From *School Improvement Under No Child Left Behind*,
Phyllis McClure, Center for American Progress, March 2005

- *Ensure appropriate funding for school improvement efforts. Because of the current funding process and the differences in the standards used by states to identify schools in need of improvement, funding per SINI varies widely among states. Congress should appropriate funds every year for a separate school improvement authorization and direct the Secretary of Education to allocate that money proportionately to states whose school improvement fund has dipped below 4 percent of its Title I Part A set-aside.*

From *School Improvement Under No Child Left Behind*,
Phyllis McClure, Center for American Progress, March 2005

- *Use school improvement funds more strategically. NCLB's accountability provisions, which require that schools report test scores in reading and math broken down by income, race, language and disability status, both identify long-struggling schools and shine the spotlight on specific areas within schools that need improvement. As such, the SIF should not be treated as just another discretionary grant program. Instead, additional resources, such as money designated under other programs for special education or English language learners, should be folded into school improvement grants. In addition, states should use the NCLB designations regarding school improvement status as a tool in identifying the communities in which these low-performing schools are located and focusing state assistance on those areas.*

From *School Improvement Under No Child Left Behind*,
Phyllis McClure, Center for American Progress, March 2005

- *Focus on effectiveness. In evaluating state education departments, federal program reviews should consider not only whether school improvement mechanisms, such as school support teams, are in place, but also whether they are successful.*

***From: Corrective Action in Low-performing Schools:
Lessons for NCLB Implementation from State and District
Strategies in First-generation Accountability Systems***

Heinrich Mintrop and Tina Trujillo, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies,
University of California, Los Angeles, July 2005

Eight Lessons:

- (1) sanctions are not the fallback solution**
- (2) no single strategy has been universally successful**
- (3) staging should be handled with flexibility**
- (4) intensive capacity building is necessary**

***From: Corrective Action in Low-performing Schools:
Lessons for NCLB Implementation from State and District
Strategies in First-generation Accountability Systems
(cont'd.)***

- Heinrich Mintrop and Tina Trujillo, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, July 2005

- (5) a comprehensive bundle of strategies is key;**
- (6) relationship-building needs to complement powerful programs;**
- (7) competence reduces conflict;**
- (8) strong state commitment is needed to create system capacity.**

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington., Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

- *The reforming districts in this analysis offer instructive exceptions to the conventional wisdom – or myths – about district reform. One myth predicts that teachers and principals will resist a strong district role. Yet our research provides evidence that a weak central office in fact limits schools’ reform progress, while a strong district role is effective and welcomed when it uses a strategic conception of responsibilities and leadership between system levels.*

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

- *Each of the reforming districts studied was a self-conscious “learning organization.” Investing in system-wide learning – in the central office, in schools, in cross-school teacher networks, and in units such as the business office that typically are excluded from professional development focused on instruction. This research suggests that taking the district system as the “unit of change” is essential to advancing equitable and sustainable reform.*

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

Effective districts:

Take Responsibility to be the Unit of Change

- Provide system communication and shared reform commitment
- Make the school system a system of schools
- Focus professional development on specific curriculum
- Lead strategic planning at the system level

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

Learn to Support School Reform Across the System

- Track school progress and define specialized support needs
- Incorporate stakeholders' input on reform goals and engaging their support
- Employ resources strategically
- Broker educators' access to know and resources
- Respond to state policy developments in ways that preserve the districts strategic focus

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

Establish a Coherent Focus on Teaching and Learning

- Adopt system wide focus on teaching and learning
- Focus intensely on literacy goals
- Ensure consistency in programs and resources brought into the reforming districts

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

Provide Instructional Support That is Responsive to School Needs

- Invest heavily in school reform
- Seek out cutting edge practices
- Have high quality professional development supports
- Attend to the professional needs of principals
- Use conventional district management tools in unconventional ways

From *Reforming Districts: How Districts Support School Reform*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, September 2003

Engender Data-Based Inquiry and Accountability

- Establish accountability for student outcomes up and down the system and with local stakeholders.
- Have clear channels of communication about student outcomes and indicators
- Use school data in strategic planning
- Use performance based assessments in reading, writing and mathematic
- Work to improve the quality of data on student performance

From: *Review of Factors and Practices Associated with School Performance in Virginia: Nine Factors* (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission)

1. Strong and stable leadership

- Leaders recognize and address gaps between student needs and supports
- Continually assess how to compensate for lack of parental support

From Review of Factors and Practices Associated with School Performance in Virginia: Nine Factors

2. Environment conducive to learning

- Set high expectations that show faith in students who are not motivated
- Do not accept demographics as an excuse
- Address a wider range and higher incidence of behavior problems
- Reinforce success and recognition & rewards

From Review of Factors and Practices Associated with School Performance in Virginia: Nine Factors

3. Effective teaching staff

4. data-driven practices

- Provide useful staff development
- Rely heavily on data analysis to identify students who need help and to design remediation to address specific weaknesses

From Review of Factors and Practices Associated with School Performance in Virginia: Nine Factors

5. Curriculum alignment, pacing and resources

6. Differentiation in teaching

7. Academic remediation

- More extensive and intensive
- Principals and teachers are committed to doing whatever it takes

From Review of Factors and Practices Associated with School Performance in Virginia: Nine Factors

8. Teamwork, collaboration and vertical integration
9. Structure and intensity of the school day
 - Maximize time for instruction
 - Focus on setting schedules and allocating time to address potential weaknesses or to provide remediation