



Evaluation of Level 4 School Turnaround Efforts in Massachusetts

Part 1: Implementation Study

Laura B. Stein, M.A.

Susan B. Therriault, Ed.D.

Alexandra M. Kistner, M.A.

Amelia Auchstetter

Karen Melchior

September 2016

Evaluation of Level 4 School Turnaround Efforts in Massachusetts

Part 1. Implementation Study

September 2016

Laura B. Stein, M.A.
Susan B. Therriault, Ed.D.
Alexandra M. Kistner, M.A.
Amelia Auchstetter
Karen Melchior



1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-3835
202.403.5000 | TTY 877.334.3499

www.air.org

Copyright © 2016 American Institutes for Research. All rights reserved.

6587_09/16

Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	2
Introduction.....	4
Methodology	8
2014–15 Monitoring Site Visit Reports.....	8
Selection of Schools for Analysis.....	9
Extant Data Analysis.....	11
Exited Schools Survey	13
Findings.....	15
Autonomy	15
Communication Culture.....	17
Instructional Foci and Expectations.....	19
Classroom Observation Feedback and Data Use	20
Multitiered Systems of Support	22
Nonacademic Student Supports	24
Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan.....	26
Expanded Learning Opportunities	27
Family Engagement	29
Sustaining Improvement	30
Limitations	33
“Improving” and “Struggling” Current Level 4 Schools.....	33
Extant MSV Data.....	33
Exited School Sample.....	33
Conclusion	35
Suggestions for Future Research	35
Appendix A. Codebook	A–1
Appendix B. Exited School Survey	B–1
Appendix C. Exited School Survey Data.....	C–1

Executive Summary

As part of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE's) ongoing commitment to improving supports provided to all schools, and to the lowest-performing schools in particular, American Institutes for Research conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of how Level 4 schools use School Redesign Grants (SRGs) and other supports to catalyze improvement and how SRGs, specifically, impact student achievement. This report summarizes findings from our qualitative analyses of how Level 4 schools implement key turnaround practices. A separate report analyzing the impact of SRGs on school turnaround, using comparative interrupted time series analyses, will be submitted separately. In addition, as part of this work we developed the *2016 Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Field Guide* for school and district leaders that further illustrates, by example, how schools achieve successful turnaround.

Previous ESE efforts focused on understanding school turnaround in Massachusetts revealed that successful turnaround schools generally implement four key practices as follows:

1. Establishing a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration
2. Employing intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction
3. Providing student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs
4. Establishing a climate and culture that provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the school's focus on increasing student achievement

But how should a school prioritize its turnaround efforts within and across each of these four broad areas? This evaluation attempted to answer that question and elaborate on the key turnaround practices by identifying specific, high-yield strategies or activities related to each turnaround practice that distinguish schools able to improve student outcomes from schools struggling to do so.

The study relied heavily on rich, existing data collected from Level 4 school stakeholders as part of ESE's Level 4 school monitoring processes. These data included school-level ratings for turnaround practice implementation, which enabled the study team to focus exploration on schools with high and low implementation ratings specifically. As of fall 2015, 18 schools already had exited Level 4 and, thus, had no current-year data regarding turnaround practice implementation because they were no longer part of ESE's Level 4 school monitoring process. Principals from these schools completed an online survey about their experience as leader of a Level 4 school and since exiting Level 4 to inform the evaluation.

Nine overarching areas emerged as essential elements of turnaround work for improving Level 4 schools, defined as high implementers exhibiting early evidence of improvement, and already exited schools, as follows:

- Strategic use of staffing and scheduling autonomy
- Culture of open, two-way communication
- Establishment of clear, consistent, and aligned instructional foci and expectations
- Regular use of classroom observations to improve instruction
- Consistent implementation of a well-defined multitiered system of support
- Provision of nonacademic student supports, including social-emotional supports
- Consistent implementation of a schoolwide student behavior plan
- Focus on offering expanded learning opportunities
- Commitment to engaging families in student learning

Struggling schools, defined as low implementers not yet showing clear evidence of improvement, often found these same areas the most challenging to address. Throughout the report, we describe wherever possible effective solutions to common challenges.

Survey data collected from already exited schools shed some light on why some schools have been able to sustain improvements over time, after exiting Level 4 (and often relinquishing some autonomies that come with that designation) and in many cases losing SRG funds, whereas other schools are not able to sustain the improvements they made while Level 4. Although most schools surveyed indicated that all four turnaround practices were essential to their ability to improve student outcomes and ultimately exit Level 4 status, schools able to sustain improvements over time—referred to throughout as *continuous improvement schools*—reported one key difference in their overall approach from that of schools that have stalled or declined since exiting. Continuous improvement schools recognized the limited nature of time, resources, and staff willingness and strategically prioritized continued improvement efforts, whereas less successful schools tried to do it all.

This report reveals the high-yield strategies successful turnaround schools implement and acknowledges related challenges all schools face. The *2016 Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Field Guide*, which serves as a companion document to this report, lays out cross-cutting themes and actions that characterize successful turnaround schools, along with real-world examples, in authentic and varied contexts, of how schools overcome common challenges and implement specific turnaround strategies.

Each school is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to turnaround. However, taken together, these documents further the important work of building a shared understanding of what it often takes to turn around a low-performing school. In sharing this information, we hope to contribute to the ability of schools to focus on strategies most likely to impact student outcomes, as evidenced by other schools facing similar challenges, and ESE can continue to refine its approach to supporting the lowest-performing schools in the state, thus laying the groundwork for all schools to succeed.

Introduction

To accompany Massachusetts' January 2010 passing of the *Act Relative to the Achievement Gap* (or the Act), which allows the state to intervene in struggling schools, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) adopted regulations in April 2010 to formalize the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE's) approach to engaging with these schools to improve student performance.¹ Based on the regulations, all Massachusetts schools would henceforth be classified into Levels 1 through 5, based on absolute achievement, student growth, and improvement trends as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Level 1 represents the highest performing schools in need of the least support, and Level 5 represents the lowest performing schools in need of the most support (and, in fact, to be placed under state control).

Level 4 represents the state's most struggling schools *not* under state control. Three years after a school's initial designation as Level 4, the school becomes eligible to exit Level 4. Schools that have shown sufficient improvement by this time are designated as Level 3, 2, or 1, depending on the level of improvement shown. Some schools remain as Level 4, with ESE deeming those schools as needing additional time to show sufficient improvement, but on the right track; these schools' accountability level is reassessed each year that follows. Schools that have continued to decline in performance during their first three years as a Level 4 school may be designated Level 5 and placed under control of an external receiver.

Level 4 districts and schools are eligible for a number of supports from ESE to support their turnaround efforts², and for many of these schools, support from ESE includes additional funds in the form of a School Redesign Grant (SRG). Since 2010, Massachusetts has been awarded over \$90 million in federal School Improvement Grant funds to provide SRGs to districts with Level 4 schools.³ To date, six cohorts of Massachusetts schools, composed of three Level 3 schools and 56 Level 4 schools, have received SRGs. Of those, 22 schools have shown improvement and, consequently, exited Level 4.⁴ Once a school exits Level 4, some of the supports offered to the school while designated as Level 4 are no longer available. Some schools have created systems and structures and are able to build on the improvements they made that led to their exit, while other schools struggle to continue improving and may stall or decline.

During the past several years, ESE, in collaboration with independent researchers, has conducted several studies related to Level 4 and SRG schools. The first study, conducted by the University

¹ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). Education laws and regulations. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr2.html?section=all>.

² The largest urban districts in the state, for example, are each assigned a district liaison who works on behalf of ESE to link schools to resources and opportunities and provide on-site support to schools in some cases. ESE provides support to schools in other districts via District and School Assistance Centers and gives priority to schools in Level 3 and 4 districts. ESE provides additional targeted support to Level 4 districts that have been placed on an Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) in the form of an ESE-funded AIP manager who provides intensive support for planning, implementation, and capacity-building and an AIP monitor who reviews AIP benchmarks and observes key activities outlined in the AIP.

³ Prior to 2012, districts with Level 3 schools also were eligible to apply for funds, and three Level 3 schools received SRGs. Since then, SRGs have been awarded to Level 4 schools only.

⁴ Four schools exited in December 2015. These schools were not included in our analysis of exited schools.

of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI), focused on the 31 schools identified as Level 4 in 2010, and eligible for exit in 2013, who received SRG funding. Key findings from the study included:

- “SRG represents a very promising and more effective model [than prior state-led reform efforts] for catalyzing improvement in struggling Massachusetts schools.
- Improvement or positive momentum is evident across SRG schools. Progress is rooted in clear vision for improvement, aligned curriculum, educator development, and use of data.
- The most successful SRG schools are characterized by an intense focus on their redesign goals and integrated approaches to achieving them, beginning with leadership.
- Several specific strategies support successful redesign and help to further explain the differences among schools that Exited Level 4 status and those that continued to struggle.
- Sustainability of improvement is not ensured, but there is cautious optimism due to SRG’s focus on building the capacity of schools and the districts that support their success.”⁵

ESE, in collaboration with American Institutes for Research (AIR), also conducted an evaluation of supports provided specifically to Commissioner’s Districts (the largest urban districts in the state), which include SRGs, as well as support from district liaisons and priority partners.⁶ Initial findings from this work suggested that SRGs had a greater impact on a school’s ability to improve student outcomes than targeted supports from district liaisons or priority partners. Subsequent comparative interrupted time series (CITS) analyses conducted as part of this study examined the impact of SRGs on schools in Commissioner’s Districts as compared with non-SRG schools within the same district. The study focused only on SRG schools from Cohorts 1, 2, and 3, and only within Commissioner’s Districts, and found that students in SRG schools performed better on the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics sections of the MCAS compared with students in comparison non-SRG schools.⁷ The study found that SRG receipt also was associated with a decrease in the achievement gap on both the ELA and mathematics sections between English language learner (ELL) and non-ELL students in SRG schools compared with the change in the achievement gap between students in the comparison non-SRG schools.

Finally, ESE contracted with the Institute for Strategic Leadership and Learning (INSTLL) to analyze extant qualitative data, primarily monitoring site visit (MSV) reports, school turnaround plans, and SRG applications and renewals, from the 35 schools identified as Level 4 in 2010. The primary purpose of these analyses was to distinguish specific practices or strategies in schools that had shown rapid and significant gains in student achievement (*achievement gain schools*) from schools that had not. This work, conducted during a period of several years,

⁵ Key findings from executive summary of *Massachusetts School Redesign Grant Initiative: Final Evaluation Report*, UMDI, June 2015. Full report located here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2015/06SRG-FinalReport.pdf>

⁶ Priority partners include external organizations that support turnaround efforts in four areas: maximizing learning time; the effective use of data; social, emotional, and health needs; and district systems of support.

⁷ The effects were statistically significant after the first, second, and third years of SRG implementation on both the ELA and mathematics sections. Full report located here: http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/15-2687_SRG_Impact-Report_ed_FINAL.pdf

eventually resulted in a set of four key turnaround practices that characterized achievement gain schools in the sample. During the past two years, ESE has refined and elaborated on these key practices, which now form the basis for the Level 4 Turnaround Plan Directions and Guidance shared with all Level 4 districts and schools. The practices also are articulated further in the *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Indicators and Continuum* document. Since 2015, ESE has used the research-based indicators contained in the *Continuum* to monitor progress of Level 4 schools.⁸ The four key turnaround practices are as follows:

1. Establishing a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration
2. Employing intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction
3. Providing student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs
4. Establishing a climate and culture that provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the school's focus on increasing student achievement⁹

Our current work builds upon previous efforts to understand how Level 4 schools use SRGs and other supports to catalyze rapid improvement and to understand the impact of SRGs on student achievement. The work extends previous efforts in the following key ways:

- Highlights *specific* strategies implemented by both schools showing improvement and already exited schools and illustrates the connections between real strategies and the key turnaround practices and indicators codified in the *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Indicators and Continuum* document
- Identifies common challenges, or pitfalls, associated with implementing key turnaround practices
- Considers how turnaround strategies can be sustained over time, after exiting Level 4 or after SRG funds have expired

In addition, a supplemental impact study, using CITS analyses, will extend findings from AIR's report on the impact of SRGs on Commissioner's Districts by incorporating SRG cohorts 4, 5, and 6 as well as SRG schools from three additional districts (Lawrence, New Bedford, and Salem). Results from the impact study will be presented in a separate report.

This report opens with a description of the mixed methods used for the implementation study. As part of this description, we include information about the process for identifying "improving" and "struggling" current Level 4 schools and the key findings. Each finding aims to illustrate, by

⁸ See American Institutes for Research and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2015, September). *Massachusetts monitoring site visits turnaround practices indicators and continuum*. Retrieved from <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/monitor-site-visits-turnaround-indicators.pdf>.

⁹ See Lane, B., Unger, C., & Souvanna, P. (2014). *Turnaround practices in action: A three-year analysis of school and district practices, systems, policies, and use of resources contributing to successful turnaround efforts in Massachusetts Level 4 schools*. Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/practices-report-2014.pdf>.

way of example, how specific strategies used by improving schools and related strategies used by struggling schools differ, with an eye to unpacking variation in implementation that ultimately impacts a school's ability to make dramatic improvements in student achievement. Each finding also presents common challenges schools face and specific examples of how improving schools overcome those challenges. The report concludes with suggestions for future research.

In addition to this report, AIR and INSTLL are developing a *Turnaround Practices Field Guide*. The *2016 Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Field Guide* will provide practitioners with specific detail and examples of what turnaround practices look like in school-specific contexts so that leaders of Level 3 and Level 4 schools can apply these practices in their own district- and school-specific contexts.

Methodology

For this evaluation, we focused primarily on current Level 4 schools, most of which also are SRG recipients.¹⁰ This decision was driven primarily by the fact that, for these schools, we already had rich interview and focus group data, from a wide range of stakeholders, about school turnaround efforts and baseline measures of implementation. The *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Indicators and Continuum* was used to rate each of these schools on their implementation progress, and evidence to support each school’s ratings was described in each school’s 2014–15 MSV report.¹¹ The 2014–15 MSV reports served as the primary data sources used to understand what effective implementation of turnaround practices looks like in authentic—and varied—school contexts. We identify effective turnaround strategies throughout on the basis of prevalence of strategies among improving and exited schools but, given the methodology, cannot draw any causal relationships between specific strategies and improvement. We collected data from already exited schools via a survey administered to current and former principals from the 18 exited schools.

2014–15 Monitoring Site Visit Reports

In preparation for the 2014–15 MSVs, AIR and ESE worked together to identify specific indicators related to each of the four turnaround practice areas and to define implementation of each indicator across a continuum. Although the indicators related to each turnaround practice area do not represent the full range of activities or strategies a school may be employing in support of the turnaround practice, they do represent measurable, research-based strategies that have been observed in Level 4 and Level 5 schools that have realized rapid improvements in student outcomes.

MSV teams from AIR collected interview and focus group data from a wide range of district- and school-level stakeholders during the 2014–15 MSVs, along with classroom observation data, and these data contributed to the resulting annual MSV reports submitted to ESE. All data collected through interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded to one or more practice area indicators. Data for each indicator were analyzed to determine the level of implementation for that indicator, from “limited evidence” to “sustaining.” See Figure 1 for an example of one indicator, “Use of Autonomy.”

At the *sustaining* level, “the organizational practices, structures, and processes” related to that indicator “are functioning effectively, and timely feedback systems are embedded to identify potential problems and challenges. ... The practice is embedded into the school culture.” In addition, a holistic rating of the level of implementation for each overall practice area, from “limited evidence” to “coherent implementation,” was determined based on data and ratings for each indicator within that area. In addition to individual indicator and overall practice area

¹⁰ For the CITS analyses, we limited our sample to Level 4 SRG recipients only to better understand the impact of the treatment—SRG—on school improvement for schools experiencing comparable student achievement outcomes.

¹¹ To inform the 2015 annual MSV reports, AIR interviewed a wide range of stakeholders from each school, including school leaders, teachers, ELL specialists and special educators, leadership team members, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, nurses and guidance counselors, external support providers, and students. In addition, AIR interviewed district liaisons to each school. The protocols used focused on learning more about the specific ways in which the school was making progress related to each of the four key turnaround practice areas.

ratings, the 2014–15 annual MSV reports included specific evidence and examples to support each rating.

Figure 1. Excerpt From *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum*

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration				
Indicator	Limited Evidence	Developing	Providing	Sustaining
Use of Autonomy	School leaders have little to no autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) to make decisions about key elements of the school, such as staffing and length of the school day.	School leaders have some autonomy to make decisions about key elements of the school (e.g., staffing, school schedule) but have not yet used this autonomy or are uncertain how best to use it.	School leaders have the autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) to make decisions about key elements of the school day and have begun to use this autonomy to make changes in the school.	School leaders use the autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) and authority to focus work on implementing their turnaround plan or other improvement efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

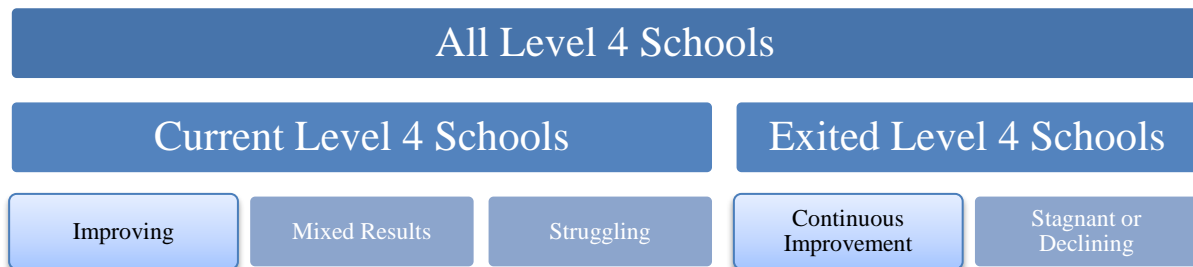
Given that the interviews and focus groups conducted as part of the MSV addressed specific indicators of progress within each turnaround practice area, the resulting reports offered a wealth of extant data that could be explored. Unfortunately, we did not have 2014–15 MSV data for schools that had already shown enough improvement to exit Level 4. Recognizing the importance of learning from exited schools as well, who no longer receive MSV reports, we conducted a survey of principals from exited schools to collect information from those schools about key turnaround practices and strategies.

Selection of Schools for Analysis

To identify and explore the most (and least) effective strategies for school improvement and common challenges to school turnaround work efficiently, the research team identified a subset of current Level 4 schools whose MSV reports would serve as the primary data set for the qualitative analyses. Other MSV reports would be analyzed only as needed to confirm or substantiate potential findings.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between all Level 4 schools and the schools selected for inclusion in this study.

Figure 2. Level 4 School Types



The team used the following criteria related to 2014–15 MSV scores to determine the initial set of potential improving¹² and struggling schools:

- Five highest and lowest overall 2014–15 MSV turnaround practice (TP) implementation ratings, an indicator of turnaround progress (see “2014–15 MSV TP Ratings” column in Table 1). The highest scores indicate **top** schools, and the lowest scores indicate *bottom* schools.
- Five highest and lowest overall 2014–15 MSV schoolwide instructional observation report (SIOR) ratings, an indicator of instructional quality (see “2014–15 MSV SIOR Ratings” column in Table 1). The highest scores indicate **top** schools, and the lowest scores indicate *bottom* schools.

The initial list of 16 schools comprised all schools rated in the top five¹³ or bottom five for *either* turnaround practice implementation or instructional observations (conducted using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System [CLASS]).¹⁴ Each of the five highest rated schools in terms of turnaround practice implementation received a rating of “sustaining” for at least one of the four turnaround practice areas (see definition in the 2014–15 Monitoring Site Visit Reports section on page 8), while each of the five lowest rated schools received a rating of “no evidence” or “developing” for all indicators. Each of the five highest rated schools in terms of instructional observations scored at least in the middle range for all domains and occasionally in the high range. The five lowest rated schools scored in the low range for some domains, and none of the lowest rated schools scored in the high range for any domains.

To ensure that schools receiving the highest MSV ratings were in fact *continuing* to show improvement and an overall positive trajectory over time, and that schools receiving the lowest ratings continued to struggle, the team used the following additional criteria to determine the final sample of schools for consideration:

- 2013–14 MSV areas for improvement
- Recent MCAS score trajectory (**improving**, mixed, *declining*)

Only schools with three or fewer areas for improvement, according to the 2013–14 MSV, and a positive trajectory were considered “improving.” Only schools with three or more areas for improvement, according to the 2013–14 MSV, and a flat or negative trajectory were considered “struggling.” Taken together, the team ultimately identified five schools making progress in two or more of the key turnaround practice areas, designated henceforth as “improving,” and five schools struggling to make progress, designated henceforth as “struggling.” Schools with mixed data, according to the criteria used, were excluded from the set. Table 1 shows the initial and final set of schools whose data were used to explore implementation of turnaround strategies in Level 4 schools, most of which also received SRGs.

¹² Previous work conducted by INSTLL uses the term “achievement gain” schools, which refers to “schools making substantial and dramatic gains in student achievement.” “Improving” schools, the term used throughout, refers to schools showing progress toward implementing key turnaround practices and at least some improvement in student achievement, suggestive of a positive trajectory for improvement.

¹³ Six schools were included in the top list for turnaround practice implementation ratings due to a tie in ratings, with two schools receiving the highest ratings and four schools receiving the next highest ratings.

¹⁴ For more information on this tool, visit <http://teachstone.com/classroom-assessment-scoring-system/>.

The final set of schools represents schools located across six districts; schools serving elementary, middle, and high school students; and schools from SRG cohorts 2 through 5, along with one non-SRG school. The diversity of schools included ensures that findings about turnaround strategies and challenges reflect a variety of contexts and constraints.

In addition to these 10 current Level 4 schools, researchers also examined documents from eight previous Level 4 schools that already exited to an improved accountability level (“exited schools”) to ensure that overall findings reflected common strategies implemented by exited schools as well.¹⁵

Table 1. Potential Improving/Struggling Schools

	School	School Level	2014–15 MSV TP Ratings	2014–15 MSV SIOR Ratings	2014–15 MCAS Score Trajectory	2013–14 MSV Number of Areas for Improvement
Improving	1	Elementary	Top	Top	Improved	One
	2	Middle	Mid	Top	Improved	Two
	3	Elementary	Top	Mid	Improved	Two
	4	High	Top	Mid	Improved	Two
	5	Elementary	Top	Mid	Improved	Three
Schools Not Included		Middle	Mid	Top	Improved	Three
		Middle	Top	Mid	N/A	N/A
		Elementary	Top	Mid	Mixed	Three
		Middle	Mid	Top	<i>Declined</i>	One
		Middle/High	<i>Bottom</i>	Top	N/A	Three
		Elementary	Mid	<i>Bottom</i>	N/A	Three
Struggling	1	Elementary	<i>Bottom</i>	Mid	N/A	Three
	2	Elementary	<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Bottom</i>	N/A	Three
	3	High	Mid	<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Declined</i>	Five
	4	Middle	<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Declined</i>	Five
	5	Elementary	<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Declined</i>	Six

Extant Data Analysis

The 2014–15 MSV reports for the schools list above served as the primary data sources examined for evidence of prevalent strategies used by current Level 4 schools and common challenges to improvement. The 2013–14 MSV reports and exit assurance applications served as the primary extant data sources considered for exited schools.¹⁶ All MSV reports and exit assurance applications were uploaded into NVivo, a computer program used for qualitative data analysis. AIR researchers then developed a codebook using the *Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum* as the framework for categorizing specific strategies and challenges related to each indicator. Researchers then added additional codes to capture information related to factors facilitating, or in some cases inhibiting, these practices, including autonomies, district

¹⁵ Two “improving” schools ultimately exited Level 4 in late 2015.

¹⁶ Exit assurance applications are completed by districts on behalf of exiting schools and document the district’s plans to support the school’s continued improvement over time, including continuation of certain autonomies. A school’s eventual exit from Level 4 is contingent upon ESE’s review and approval of these plans.

and state systems of support, and external partnerships. Researchers reviewed each document and sorted the text into one or more of these coding categories.

To ensure that codes were assigned consistently by all researchers, two researchers independently double-coded two of the reports, one improving school’s MSV and one struggling school’s MSV, and discussed coding questions and issues. The coding team reviewed and revised coding for the two reports discussed and then updated the codebook before coding the remaining documents. Throughout the coding process, the coding team met regularly to discuss coding issues and to establish rules and exceptions for inclusion in the codebook. See Appendix A for the complete codebook, which includes several subcategories capturing specific details within each turnaround practice and indicator.

Once all data had been coded, the research team compiled a list of strategies most frequently mentioned by staff in the improving and exited schools. Themes found in at least four schools were shared with ESE and considered as promising strategies for further exploration. The research team then continued to examine the coded reports from all 10 current Level 4 schools, looking both at the improving and struggling schools, to identify common challenges schools face. Challenges found in documents from exited schools also were analyzed, and areas where exited schools mentioned the same challenges as current Level 4 schools were noted.

The research team noted a pattern in the data showing close correlation between the most commonly mentioned challenges from staff at struggling schools and the areas in which staff at improving, and oftentimes exited, schools discussed strategies that were most important to their improvement. These challenge-strategy pairs spanned the turnaround practices, with at least one emerging from each practice area.

Figure 3 shows the nine overarching topic areas, which span all four turnaround practices, that emerged as the key elements of turnaround work in these schools and serve as the organizing structure for the findings contained in this report. As indicated throughout the report, many topic areas are associated with more than one turnaround practice.

Figure 3. Alignment of Turnaround Practices and Topic Areas

Turnaround Practice	Topic Area
1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration	Autonomy
	Communication Culture
2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction	Instructional Foci and Expectations
	Classroom Observation Feedback and Data Use
3. Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students	Multitiered Systems of Support
	Nonacademic Student Supports
4. School Climate and Culture	Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan
	Expanded Learning Opportunities
	Family Engagement

Throughout the analysis and identification of these strategies and challenges, the research team shared emerging themes with ESE and discussed how these could influence further exploration of extant data and collection of new data.

Exited Schools Survey

To better understand how exited schools improved student outcomes while in Level 4 status, and how some of those schools have continued to sustain improvement over time (since exiting Level 4 and losing SRG funds), we developed an online survey for current and, when appropriate, former principals from the 18 schools that had exited Level 4 status as of last fall. Eighteen current and six former school leaders were invited to participate. Twenty participants completed at least a portion of the survey, representing 17 of the 18 exited schools. Participants from 14 schools provided responses about their experience since exiting Level 4. Of the 13 schools whose staff answered survey questions about the school's experience since exiting Level 4, seven schools have continued to show improvement across time, henceforth called *continuous improvement* schools, and six schools have stagnated or declined in terms of student performance.¹⁷ We used the following criteria to distinguish continuous improvement schools from those that have stagnated or declined¹⁸ since exiting:

- Higher percentile than when they exited Level 4
- Cumulative aggregate Progress and Performance Index (PPI)¹⁹ higher when they exited Level 4
- In at least the 15th percentile in 2015
- Cumulative aggregate PPI above 75 for all students and for more than half of their eligible subgroups in 2015

The school needs to meet at least four of these five criteria. In addition, the school *cannot* be in the 5th percentile or lower in 2015 or have a cumulative aggregate PPI of less than 75 in 2015.

The survey, composed primarily of closed-ended question to minimize burden, asked principals involved in turnaround to (1) indicate how important specific strategies related to key turnaround practice areas were to his or her school's ability to improve and exit Level 4, (2) identify factors or conditions they believe impacted turnaround efforts, and (3) note the biggest challenges to improvement the school faced. Current principals also were asked specifically about key strategies to sustaining improvement over time, especially without additional autonomies typically afforded Level 4 schools and additional funds provided to SRG schools. See Appendix B for the full survey; see Appendix C for tables of survey results.

Survey findings were used to support qualitative claims about key strategies used in and challenges faced by exited schools. Survey results were analyzed by examining frequencies for each item and looking at correlations between responses to certain items (e.g., level of autonomy during and since turnaround, and challenges during and since turnaround). Researchers also used

¹⁷ Three additional schools that have continued to show improvement over time did not complete the survey items about the school's experience since exiting Level 4.

¹⁸ No exited school is performing worse than when the school initially was declared Level 4, but most schools identified as stagnant or declining have experienced drops in cumulative aggregate Progress and Performance Index since exiting.

¹⁹ The PPI combines information about narrowing proficiency gaps, growth, and graduation and dropout rates into a single number to assess the improvement of each school toward its own targets. A PPI of 75 or higher for all students and high-needs students suggests the school is making progress toward closing proficiency gaps.

the survey data to identify schools whose approach to turnaround merited additional data collection, through interviews and focus groups, to document details about the approach that may be useful for other turnaround schools.²⁰ These new data, along with the findings described in this report, will inform the *Turnaround Practices Field Guide*, which will serve as a practitioners' guide for how Level 4 schools can successfully implement key turnaround practices.

²⁰ Data collected through interviews and focus groups with stakeholders in these schools focused on how specific turnaround practices were developed and implemented over time as well as stakeholders' perceptions of how specific turnaround practices led to improved student outcomes.

Findings

The findings presented below are organized by topic area. Following are the nine overarching areas that emerged as the key elements of turnaround work in these schools and serve as the organizing structure for the findings contained in this report:

- Autonomy
- Communication Culture
- Instructional Foci and Expectations
- Classroom Observation Feedback and Data Use
- Multitiered Systems of Support
- Nonacademic Student Supports
- Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan
- Expanded Learning Opportunities
- Family Engagement

All of these topic areas relate to one or more turnaround practices or indicators described in the *Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum*. In some cases, topic areas connect neatly to a specific turnaround practice and indicator; in other cases, topic areas span two or more turnaround practices or indicators. Text boxes are included throughout to illustrate the connection between the topic area presented and the *Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum*.

The findings refer to interview and focus group data collected from staff in current Level 4 schools, both improving and struggling, who participated in 2014–15 MSVs, and survey data collected from exited schools. Where appropriate, exited schools that have continued to show improvement across time are called out specifically.

Autonomy

Staff members from nearly all improving current and exited Level 4 schools described, via either interviews or surveys, increased staffing and scheduling autonomy as being especially helpful to implementing school turnaround efforts. Most surveyed principals from exited schools also reported that strategically using autonomy and authority to focus work on implementing improvement efforts was *essential* to the school’s ability to exit Level 4 status.

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration	
Indicator 1.1 Use of autonomy	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, school leaders use their autonomy (e.g., staffing, school schedule) and authority to focus work on implementing their turnaround plan or other improvement efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

Staffing Autonomy. Staff at most improving and exited schools indicated that school leaders have used autonomy to strategically recruit and hire new teachers and support staff. As one respondent said, “*The principal has flexibility to put people in the right jobs or bring people in to give the added supports to help students that are struggling.*” New principals at two improving schools, for example, added highly qualified staff to their school by recruiting staff members who had

contributed to the success of the principals' former schools. At two exited Level 4 schools, principals recruited effective teachers by offering an additional stipend. In addition to the autonomy to hire staff, Level 4 principals also have the ability to dismiss staff. Describing the principal's staffing autonomy, one teacher said, "*There was one very ineffective teacher the first couple of months, a new hire. To [the principal's] credit, she did get rid of her*" because the teacher was not contributing meaningfully to the school's turnaround efforts.

When explaining how school leaders use their staffing autonomy, school staff described how district support factored into their school's ability to recruit and hire highly qualified staff. Respondents from two struggling current Level 4 schools reported in interviews that they do not receive enough district support during the recruiting and hiring process. Staff said there needs to be more district attention to recruiting highly qualified teachers to fill all positions and recruiting a school principal who stays for more than a year. In contrast, staff from one improving current Level 4 school said that the district allowed their school to opt out of the traditional staffing-by-seniority system that exists in most schools, which helped school leaders effectively use their staffing autonomy. Leaders at this school were able to retain newer teachers who were already at their school and were acclimated to the school's culture and systems even if a veteran teacher requested a position at their school.

Scheduling Autonomy. School personnel from both current and exited Level 4 schools also described the importance of a school leader's ability to make changes to the school-day schedule. For example, some principals use their scheduling autonomies to increase instructional time for core classes and determine when snow day make-ups occur. Scheduling autonomy was exercised by two exited Level 4 schools that chose to embed common preparation time into their schedule. Furthermore, nearly all surveyed principals of exited Level 4 schools reported that the ability to control the school-day schedule for both students and staff contributed to school improvement, with the addition of teacher collaboration time being a common way that leaders chose to change staff schedules. One surveyed principal noted, "*It's important to create schedules that allow for the collaborative work during the school day.*" Another principal said, "*Ensuring that professional time was built into the schedule—a significant amount of professional time (3–4 hours per week)—was a critical component of the turnaround work.*"

Challenges. Staff members from current Level 4 schools, especially struggling schools, cited budget and staffing challenges as barriers to fully utilizing their autonomies. School personnel from two struggling current Level 4 schools, for example, explained that loss of school funding and a lack of autonomy over how their budgets are allocated has led to significant cuts in staffing. In response to similar budget cuts, one improving current Level 4 school decreased time for core instruction blocks instead of reducing staff. Personnel from three struggling current Level 4 schools also described how high staff turnover rates have made it difficult to use strategically the staffing autonomy afforded. For example, one school leader planned to replace a high percentage of staff for the next school year, a stipulation of the specific turnaround model the school chose to adopt. However, in addition to the planned and intentional staffing vacancies, the school leader faced additional unexpected staffing vacancies when some staff left their positions during the school year. As a result, and further complicated by ongoing teacher talent shortages this school faced and similar schools often face, the school leader was unable to use this staffing autonomy fully and strategically; the leader simply was trying to ensure all positions were filled. Elaborating on the school's staffing challenges, one staff member reported that one

class experienced two teacher resignations during the course of the year and said, “*That class has been unstable all year long, which impacts the entire culture of the building, particularly in our student behavior.*”

Surveyed principals from three exited schools indicated that effectively using staffing and other autonomies has been one of their top five challenges since exiting Level 4 status. Since exiting Level 4, principals have less autonomy to remove staff who do not meet performance standards and to determine staffing roles and assignments. Although Level 4 schools have certain autonomies as part of the 2010 legislation, including certain staffing, budgeting, and scheduling autonomies, these are not guaranteed on exit. Schools may, however, seek certain continued autonomies as part of their exit assurances application process.²¹

Communication Culture

When discussing school turnaround efforts, staff members from all current Level 4 schools and half of the exited Level 4 schools indicated that a two-way communication structure between school staff and school leadership is instrumental to school turnaround. In addition, when asked about the importance of an open culture of communication in school turnaround, all surveyed principals from exited schools indicated that developing a system for two-way communication was *very important* or *essential* to school improvement.

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration	
Indicator 1.5 Trusting relationships	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, most staff members share a relational, trust-focused culture with each other and their instructional supports (e.g., coaches) that is solution oriented and focused on improvement as exemplified by frequent collaboration in developing standards-based units, examining student work, analyzing student performance, and planning appropriate interventions. Educators regularly share their strengths and struggles, in the spirit of helping each other continually improve their practice.
Indicator 1.7 Communication with staff	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, formal structures are in place to build effective staff relationships balanced with transparency and open, two-way communication across staff and school teams and between administrators and staff.

Evidence from both current and exited schools indicated the importance of an open-door policy for communication between school leaders and teachers, and inviting staff opinions through vehicles such as regular teacher surveys, newsletters, or committees. Some schools also encourage staff to use coaches and members of the school’s instructional leadership team as liaisons for their concerns. At several current Level 4 schools, staff emphasized the importance of having opportunities to communicate with school leaders and feeling that their input results in changes at the school level. One staff member remarked “*Now, a lot of the things that we’re doing, it’s whole school.... We’re identifying needs together, and that’s been huge in terms of just keeping this school flowing like a real school.*”

²¹ Continued flexibilities available include budget authority, staffing authority, ability to increase or differentiate salaries, expanded time, increased planning, collaboration or professional development time, authority over the master schedule, and curriculum authority. These may be achieved by seeking expanded learning time or innovation school status, establishing new collective bargaining agreements, or direct Superintendent or Commissioner’s approval.

Teachers and school leaders stressed the importance of communicating instructional expectations consistently to the entire staff. Staff from most current Level 4 schools and all exited schools reported that leaders communicate expectations in many ways, including through offering professional development, reviewing lesson plans, and providing curriculum guides. Staff in several current Level 4 schools noted that instructional leaders monitor teacher understanding of expectations as part of regular classroom observations.

Challenges. Ensuring consistent understanding of expectations across the school, however, is not always simple. One principal wrote that the school needed “*substantial communication on the part of the principal*” to overcome schoolwide communication issues, but unfortunately “*substantial communication*” takes time and effective systems, which many principals and schools lack. Several staff members in current and exited Level 4 schools mentioned that administrators sometimes have difficulty communicating to all staff or that such attempts to engage all staff in the school’s turnaround efforts are ineffective. At one struggling school, respondents noted that there were limited opportunities for staff input beyond a single committee and, as such, many felt they lacked access to information, while staff at another school were unsure of the members of the instructional leadership team. Some surveyed principals also indicated that effectively communicating a schoolwide turnaround vision, including instructional expectations for all staff, was an ongoing challenge during turnaround. One exited principal explained that the staff were “*demoralized by the previous administration, and so accustomed to blaming students and their families for the lack of achievement, it was extremely difficult to convey the urgency needed to complete the work. Perseverance and persistence on the part of the school leadership and teacher leaders ultimately overcame most of the negative stereotypes.*”

Several staff from current and exited schools also mentioned that, despite communication efforts, they felt their input was rarely heard or acted on and described some open meetings as “*artificial opportunities*” where concerns and disagreements were not taken seriously by school leaders. Staff from one school explained that the school tends to use whole-staff meetings as the sole form of two-way communication; as a result, staff feel that their school leaders do not value their input and that messages and instructions from administrators are often lost or overlooked. According to one staff member, “*There’s just no opportunity to really say what you feel or, if there is, it’s not responded to.*” A teacher leader at one improving Level 4 school explained their more effective formal structures for two-way communication: “*As the teacher leader for the department, I attend meetings and also meet with administration and relay that information back to our weekly CPT [common planning time] meetings with our department. I’ll also relate information from my peers to the administration.*” Although this is a common formula at many schools, the connection that teachers feel to the ongoing improvement work at this school helps make this communication strategy effective. Another teacher explained, “*I see the trends and I see what’s happening, and we talk about what’s the likely cause, what’s the best effect, how do we deal with it. We get so much more feedback on what’s happening as a whole school with the plan we’re in now and what we’re doing right now. I think it’s very effective.*” This overall culture of openness plays an integral part in making teacher leader communication between department or grade-level teams and administration successful.

Instructional Foci and Expectations

When discussing instructional foci and expectations, staff at most improving current Level 4 schools and two exited schools described the importance of setting and communicating high expectations for staff and students. Staff at many improving and exited schools reported a focus on instructional rigor as a key aspect of their turnaround goals.

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration	
Indicator 1.2 High expectations and positive regard	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, school leaders understand the importance of high expectations and positive regard between leadership, staff, and students and implement strategies or activities to ensure that these elements are in fact in place. A majority of staff believe leadership, staff, and students have high expectations and demonstrate positive regard.
Turnaround Practice 2. Intentional practices for improving instruction	
Indicator 2.1 Instructional expectations	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, specific or precise expectations for high-quality instruction are communicated and understood by most staff, monitored by school leaders, and consistently implemented by most teachers.

Staff from both struggling and improving Level 4 schools, along with staff from exited schools, also emphasized the importance of using data to establish instructional goals, with one person stating, “*We really just sat down and spent weeks going through the data, working with the instructional leadership teams, pulling teachers together, and saying, ‘What are the priorities that exist? What’s the data that backs that up? What are the root causes?’*” Staff at most improving schools describe monitoring progress toward their turnaround goals by meeting regularly to review Achievement Network (ANet) and other student data.

Staff and school leaders both discussed the importance of creating, and monitoring, clear instructional expectations that are understood by all staff. Surveyed principals from 13 exited schools indicated that establishing a clear instructional focus and shared expectations was *essential* to their school improvement efforts. Staff members at several improving schools specifically noted an emphasis on higher-order thinking tasks as well as regularly checking for student understanding during instruction. Staff at most current Level 4 schools and several exited schools also discussed classroom observations and walk-throughs as integral to monitoring the consistency of implementation of the instructional expectations. For example, a staff member in one current Level 4 school said, “*We are always doing learning walks in the classrooms and working with the principal on completing observations so that we can come out and have conversations about the degree to which specific instructional practices that we’re focusing on are being implemented.*” Staff also described observation feedback as a method of communicating expectations, such as using classroom observation protocols that align with school goals. Other ways to ensure expectations that were commonly mentioned across both current and exited schools include the use of coaching, common planning time, lesson templates, and curriculum guides. Several improving schools also use targeted professional development to “*establish expectations and common practices and language to use in the classroom*” and to familiarize teachers with new curriculum maps. A couple of improving schools also rely on their district for this type of support.

Challenges. Evidence from MSVs at many Level 4 schools suggests inconsistencies at the classroom level in implementing instructional expectations, as shown by low instructional observation scores²² in classrooms across the schools. At times, even improving and exited schools struggled to effectively implement expectations. According to one exited school principal, “*Overcoming the [issue of] consistently implementing and monitoring high expectations required the principal to spend an enormous amount of time at school and at home providing comprehensive evaluations with constructive feedback.*” In several struggling schools, although staff were able to name the broader instructional goals of their school, they often struggled to “*articulate the specific instructional expectations or how these practices might manifest themselves in their classrooms.*” Teachers at several struggling schools and some exited schools that have struggled to maintain improvements since exiting Level 4 status discussed a lack of specific and actionable feedback as a challenge to improving instruction. One teacher remarked that she “*was told to increase the rigor of her questions and was left wondering what it meant to increase rigor,*” whereas others indicated that structures for lesson plan feedback are unclear. Staff at both struggling schools and some exited schools that have had difficulty maintaining improvements since exiting Level 4 status mentioned that the system for classroom observations was, at times, inconsistent, and had mixed views of the usefulness of feedback because it was not always clear how the feedback related to the instructional focus or expectations in their school.

Classroom Observation Feedback and Data Use

In conversations about school turnaround efforts, staff members from all improving Level 4 schools and most exited Level 4 schools discussed regular classroom observations as critical to their turnaround efforts.

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration	
Indicator 1.5 Trusting relationships	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, most staff members share a relational, trust-focused culture with each other and their instructional supports (e.g., coaches) that is solution oriented and focused on improvement as exemplified by frequent collaboration in developing standards-based units, examining student work, analyzing student performance, and planning appropriate interventions. Educators regularly share their strengths and struggles, in the spirit of helping each other continually improve their practice.
Turnaround Practice 2. Intentional practices for improving instruction	
Indicator 2.4 Classroom observation data use	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, instructional leaders conduct weekly or daily classroom observations (e.g., learning walkthroughs) focused on strengthening teachers’ instructional practices and provide specific and actionable feedback on the quality and effectiveness of instruction to individual teachers and teacher teams. These data inform instructional conversations and the provision of targeted and individualized supports (e.g., coaching) for teachers, as needed.

²² MSV classroom observation scores range from 0 to 7; scores between 0 and 2.9 are in the low range, scores between 3.0 and 5.9 are in the middle range, and scores between 6.0 and 7 are in the high range. Overall, improving schools had higher average scores in all domains than struggling schools: Instructional Support domain – 4.0 in improving schools, 3.0 in struggling schools; Emotional Support domain – 5.5 in improving schools, 4.6 in struggling schools; Classroom Organization domain – 6.3 in improving schools, 5.2 in struggling schools.

Staff members said school leaders regularly conduct classroom observations and provide specific, actionable feedback to teachers based on these observations. In one improving current Level 4 school, teachers explained that instructional leaders target feedback to specific learning goals and relate feedback to professional development experiences, for example, *“a lot of the feedback goes back to our PD [professional development] on Teach Like a Champion.”* Teachers at this school went on to remark that *“no matter what your rating is, there’s always feedback of what you can do to improve your practice.”* Staff members in most schools said that school leaders conduct observations on a weekly basis or during monthly learning walks and deliver feedback from these observations to teachers in a timely manner in writing or through face-to-face conversations. Individual teachers reported that school administrators do informal observations or walk-throughs in their classrooms at least once a month and conduct formal observations three or four times a year. According to staff in current Level 4 schools, teachers usually receive feedback within four days of their observation and often within a day or two. When asked about the importance of classroom observations in school turnaround, surveyed principals from ten exited Level 4 schools indicated that instructional leaders conducting regular classroom observations and providing feedback to teachers was *essential* to school improvement.

In addition to observations conducted by school leaders, staff members from both improving and exited schools found *peer* observations particularly helpful in improving their instruction. Teachers in many schools had the opportunity to observe peers at their school or, in one instance, at other schools in the district. Teachers at one improving school explained peer observations within their school: *“We go around as department teams and we’ll observe people within our department, we’ll observe people in other departments, we’ll see those classrooms, and then we can see what’s working. Not only are we hearing it in the peer reviews [of lesson plans], but then we’re seeing it, what’s working and what’s not.”* During these teacher-initiated and -led peer observations, there is always a *“focus question based on a concern that we have”* that guides what the teachers look for while in the classes. Teachers said that peer observations were helpful because they could see examples of high-quality instruction and, after observing instruction of higher grade levels, prepare their students for the instruction they would receive in future years.

Instructional leaders use data collected from classroom observations to provide recommendations to individual teachers and make schoolwide decisions. In most improving schools and some exited schools, observers give teachers specific, actionable feedback to improve instruction and set up tailored supports. As one teacher said, *“Most of the time [the coach] will give me data on what she saw and then she’ll give me action steps to tweak to make it a little bit better. . . . There’s a lot of collaboration.”* Surveyed principals from ten exited Level 4 schools indicated that using classroom observation data to inform instructional conversations and provision of targeted and individualized supports for teachers was *essential* to school improvement. To help make school-level changes in instruction, school leaders from a few current Level 4 schools reported using observation data to plan professional development and instructional leadership team activities.

According to interviewed and surveyed school-level staff, one factor that contributed to effectively conducting classroom observations in some schools was district support. Staff members from both current and exited Level 4 schools reported that district staff help improve instruction by participating in walk-throughs and classroom observations. When describing observations conducted by district staff, one teacher said, *“They’ve come straight up to me and said, ‘Do you have any questions? How do you feel this is going? Do you have any questions*

about the materials you're using?' That was pleasant. I enjoyed being able to know that they're actually on the same page as me. You don't always see the behind the scenes stuff as a teacher.”

Challenges. When asked about challenges of effectively using classroom observations to improve instruction since exiting Level 4 status, multiple principals of exited schools reported that conducting classroom observations and communicating feedback to teachers was one of their most significant challenges to continued improvement. Interestingly, no principals selected this as a significant challenge to improvement while Level 4. During interviews with school personnel, participants at current struggling Level 4 schools elaborated on their challenges, both conducting classroom observations and using the observation data. A few staff members at these schools reported that no comprehensive system for classroom observations exists, so the frequency of observations and type of feedback varies among observers. Furthermore, according to staff from most struggling Level 4 schools, school leaders primarily use classroom observation data to provide recommendations and support to individual teachers, but do not often use the data to make schoolwide decisions (such as planning professional development based on observed needs) or improvements.

Multitiered Systems of Support

When asked about the supports available to students, staff at all improving Level 4 schools were able to give clear, detailed information about the schoolwide systems for identifying and addressing student needs.

Turnaround Practice 2. Intentional practices for improving instruction	
Indicator 2.3 Identifying and addressing student academic needs	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, formal teaming and collaboration strategies, processes (e.g., instructional leadership team, collaborative planning, professional learning communities), and protocols are consistently used to address individual students' academic needs by: (1) using data, (2) identifying actions to address student learning needs, and (3) regularly communicating action steps among all staff and teams to build and sustain a professional culture of learning.
Indicator 2.7 Structures for instructional improvement	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, structures, practices, and use of resources (e.g., collaborative meeting time, coaching, supports for implementing the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks) to support data-driven instruction, the use of research-based instructional strategies, and differentiation are in place and consistently implemented, resulting in rigorous instruction, reflective of the shifts in cognitive demand for the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, that meets the needs of each student.
Turnaround Practice 3. Student-specific supports and instruction to all students	
Indicator 3.2 Teacher training to identify student needs	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, most staff members are provided with training and support to ensure that they: (1) identify cues when students need additional assistance (both academic and nonacademic) and (2) respond appropriately to those cues.
Indicator 3.4 Multitiered system of support	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, leaders and teachers actively use established systems with criteria and protocols for identifying students for interventions and enrichment. This system meets all of the following conditions: (1) staff members follow consistent rules and procedures when identifying students in need of additional assistance; (2) a team of appropriate staff and stakeholders makes decisions about needed interventions and supports; and (3) staff members follow consistent rules and procedures when monitoring the delivery and effectiveness of interventions and supports.

Most improving and exited Level 4 schools had a teaming structure through which student needs were identified by regular review of student data. Student support teams at these schools meet weekly and include school administrators, guidance counselors, and department heads. At most schools, these teams discuss a small number of students at each meeting; at one school the team discusses “6–7 students” per meeting. Typically, the procedure for assigning student supports consists of teachers first identifying students they have noticed (either through observing the student in their classrooms or by reviewing data) who might need additional supports, then discussing these students at the team meeting, and finally implementing and monitoring the decided-upon interventions. As one principal explained, “*We have a student support team that meets every week, on Fridays, to go through the list and analyze which students are struggling from a behavioral standpoint. They look at referral data, they look at notes that have come out of cohorts meeting as to who is struggling. Based on that, they develop interventions, follow-up or even sometimes go observe that student in class and provide advice to the teachers.*” Staff members at another school reported that they review the “ABCs” (attendance, behavior, and course performance) during their team meetings and document progress and interventions in a Google Doc that all teachers can access. In addition to using data to identify individual student needs, school leaders, coaches, and teachers at improving schools continually reference data to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and, if needed, adjust supports. One teacher said that “*every five or six weeks we're looking back at the data, and we talk to teachers about what they think students need.*” Surveyed principals from exited Level 4 schools reported that using a variety of ongoing assessments to frequently and continually assess instructional effectiveness and identify student academic needs was *essential* to school improvement.

Unlike the improving schools, staff members at struggling current Level 4 schools had difficulty articulating the process for identifying and addressing student needs at their school. In interviews, teachers noted that there was often a team, but their vague descriptions of the team’s role and processes suggest that systematic procedures were not in place. This was common across all struggling Level 4 schools. Regarding the identification of student needs, one support team member at a struggling Level 4 school said, “*I don’t think there’s a clear process for that.*” Similarly, there did not appear to be a system for monitoring the effectiveness of interventions and adjusting supports. At struggling Level 4 schools, student support teams do not have structures or protocols in place to determine when students should enter or exit an intervention. Rather, entry and exit criteria are informal and, in some schools, determined at the classroom level. Demonstrating the specificity of criteria used in improving schools, at an exited Level 4 school, “*two consecutive scores greater than 80 percent*” serves as the set schoolwide expectation for transitioning students out of interventions.

Challenges. Surveyed principals from exited Level 4 schools reported that implementing a tiered system of academic supports and adjusting schoolwide academic supports was a significant challenge to both improving and exiting Level 4 status and to sustaining improvements after exit.²³ One of these exited principals reported losing two intervention teachers after the end of the SRG funds and said that those who remain have schedules “*full-to-the-brim just providing required SPED [special education] services. We've relied mostly on teachers to do Tier 2 interventions within their classrooms, but we don't have nearly the bandwidth we need for*

²³ Exited school leaders were most likely to report implementing a tiered system of academic support and engaging family and community members as top challenges both when at Level 4 and since exiting.

preventative intervention or a true RTI [response to intervention] system.” Another exited principal described struggles with setting up a multitiered intervention system because of a variety of factors, including the diverse levels and needs of the students and limited staff time and training. At most struggling current Level 4 schools, evidence suggests that the creation and implementation of a tiered system of supports is hindered, at least in part, by lack of training on identifying and addressing student academic needs. According to the schools’ MSVs, teachers at these schools do not have a clear sense of how to use data to identify student learning gaps. At one school, for example, some teachers reported “looking at MCAS scores” or “using DEWS [Dropout Early Warning Systems] data” while others said, “I don’t know how they identify them.” Conversely, at many improving Level 4 schools, staff members reported that they receive trainings on identifying student academic needs. Teachers said that the professional development taught them how to use data to identify student academic needs in addition to “a lot of strategies to help kids stay on task.”

Nonacademic Student Supports

In addition to significant academic needs, many Level 4 schools serve large populations of students with significant nonacademic needs, including social-emotional needs. Students’ social-emotional needs may be addressed in a multitude of ways, including through behavior management systems or structures focused on cultivating adult-student relationships in the school, as well as providing access to social services for students and families, such as mental health counseling or housing, clothing, or food assistance.

Turnaround Practice 3. Student-specific supports and instruction to all students	
Indicator 3.2 Teacher training to identify student needs	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, most staff members are provided with training and support to ensure that they: (1) identify cues when students need additional assistance (both academic and nonacademic) and (2) respond appropriately to those cues.
Indicator 3.4 Multitiered system of support	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, leaders and teachers actively use established systems with criteria and protocols for identifying students for interventions and enrichment. This system meets all of the following conditions: (1) staff members follow consistent rules and procedures when identifying students in need of additional assistance; (2) a team of appropriate staff and stakeholders makes decisions about needed interventions and supports; and (3) staff members follow consistent rules and procedures when monitoring the delivery and effectiveness of interventions and supports.
Turnaround Practice 4. School climate and culture	
Indicator 4.2 Adult-student relationships	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, structures (e.g., structured advisories, mentor programs) are in place to support relationships among students and adults and deliver social-emotional supports. These supports are monitored actively to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the school.
Indicator 4.4 Wraparound services and external partners	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, leaders and staff share individual and mutual responsibility for building the capacity of families to support education through a systemic system of wraparound services (e.g., health, housing referrals). Leaders and staff assess the needs of students and families throughout the school year.

Social-Emotional Supports. According to all but one surveyed principal from exited schools, establishing a structure to deliver social-emotional supports was *essential* or *very important* to school turnaround success. In interviews, staff at improving and exited schools described having a multi-tiered system of supports for identifying and addressing nonacademic student needs, including social-emotional needs. At one exited school, teachers mentioned many school staff who make themselves available to help students, including multiple social workers and a mental health clinician. At this school, social workers are available to any student and regularly meet one-on-one with a number of students who were identified as in need of social-emotional support. In addition to supports offered by school staff, surveyed principals from 12 exited schools indicated that having an external partner or partners focused on providing students with social-emotional supports contributed to their improvement and exit from Level 4, and many of them reported that continuing these partnerships contributed to sustaining their improvement efforts after exiting Level 4 status.

None of the struggling schools have a clear process for providing students with social-emotional supports. At one struggling school, according to the school's MSV, "*There was no evidence that social-emotional or behavioral supports were actively monitored to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the school.*"

Adult-Student Relationships. Staff at all improving schools and some exited schools also indicated the importance of establishing a structure for developing adult-student relationships. Schools developed a variety of methods for cultivating these relationships, including implementing advisory periods and Partners in Intervention (PIE). Staff at one school said, "*Significant time is devoted to relationship building with students.*" Advisory periods and programs such as PIE encourage adult-student relationships by assigning each staff member a small group of students. The staff member is expected to regularly "check in" with these students and sometimes their families. This structure allows a student to create a relationship with an adult in the school, outside of instruction. Surveyed principals from eleven exited schools indicated that developing structures for adult-student relationships was *essential* or *very important* to the success of their school turnaround. Staff at all struggling schools noted a lack of structures for developing adult-student relationships, with one staff member stating, "*I don't think there's anything official.*"

Social Support Services. Staff at many current and exited improving schools also described the importance of systems for connecting students and their families to social support services, often referred to as wraparound services. Many improving schools have systems in place to match student needs to external partners that provide services such as counseling, medical and dental support, and other social services. According to one staff member focused on this work at her school, "*I connect with the kids and the families to see if there's any services that they may need. I can make referrals to agencies in the community. I'm a distributor for GiftsToGive, so if they have basic needs, I can help them by ordering clothing, toys, books, shoes, coats . . . anything.*" Many struggling schools try to provide social services to students, but do not always have staff members dedicated to this work and teachers at the schools are not necessarily always aware of how to help their students access these services. When surveyed, exited principals from 16 schools indicated that providing social support services to students and families was *essential* or *very important* to school turnaround success and that having the support of external partners for making these connections contributed to improvement. Surveyed principals from nine exited

schools also indicated that continuing to partner with social support service providers contributed to sustaining improvement efforts.

Challenges. Some of the surveyed principals from exited schools said that implementing processes and using student data to address nonacademic student needs and delivering social-emotional supports were some of their top challenges during turnaround; a few noted that providing social-emotional supports continued to be a challenge after exiting. Many exited principals noted that the loss of grant funds for partners focused on providing social-emotional supports specifically inhibited sustained improvement. The principal from one exited school spoke about addressing this challenge, saying, “*Creating a system of support for students that includes tiered interventions for both academics and social-emotional qualities has been key in helping us to successfully continue our work. In addition, provisioning for the supports and interventions during the school day is key.*”

Both improving and struggling current Level 4 schools saw the lack of a system for providing social support services, where “*any strategies or solutions [for providing social support services] are just kind of left at the teacher level,*” as a significant barrier to turnaround. According to survey data, two exited principals also indicated that delivering social support services was a challenge to improvement, both during and after exiting Level 4 status. In addition, surveyed principals from seven exited schools stated that the loss of grant funds for partners focused on connecting students and their families to social support services made their school’s ability to sustain improvement more difficult.

Schoolwide Student Behavior Plan

In addition to serving as one way to address some nonacademic (behavioral) needs, implementing a consistent and explicit schoolwide behavior plan is also critical to allowing staff to focus on instruction, rather than frequent behavior problems.

Turnaround Practice 4. School climate and culture	
Indicator 4.1 Schoolwide behavior plan	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, the schoolwide behavior plan includes a defined set of behavioral expectations, and the system and set of structures for positive behavioral supports are aligned to those expectations. In addition, most staff members implement the procedures outlined in the schoolwide behavior plan. Leaders monitor implementation using data.

Staff at most improving Level 4 schools and at exited schools described clear and consistently implemented schoolwide behavior plans. All surveyed principals from exited schools indicated that having a clearly established and actively implemented set of behavioral expectations was *very important* or *essential* to their school’s turnaround success. Strategies for effective behavior management may include establishing clear guidelines for hallway conduct, hanging school behavior code posters in the hallways and classrooms, and creating a system of rewards and demerits. In contrast, none of the struggling Level 4 schools described having a consistently implemented schoolwide behavior plan. Staff at one of these schools described their schoolwide behavior plan as “*a loose structure of ‘norms’ or expectations in regard to behavior, but nothing well defined.*” Staff at another struggling school described their behavior plan as “*in progress,*”

stating that while they are currently “*trying to embrace more PBIS [positive behavioral interventions and supports], some more positive programs,*” the urgency of other current challenges has slowed its development. Staff members noted that administrative turnover and the significant social-emotional needs of their population are factors in the delay.

How staff establish behavior norms varies greatly across schools. A few improving schools involved the entire staff in the process, using staff meeting time during the summer to develop a clear code of conduct. At one school, “*teachers voted on the school’s... expectations, identifying the following as the school’s behavioral motto: Caring, Accountable, Respectful, Every day (CARE).*” Several schools also embed elements of PBIS into their school’s behavior plan, the importance of which was described both by many exited schools and improving current Level 4 schools, in addition to one struggling current Level 4 school. One staff member explained, “*When we did the research and looked at the data, PBIS really gave us that guide that we needed to really look at the social-emotional piece and to really be able to put in not only the incentives and everything else that they need, but to bring in [social support] services for the child’s emotional needs.*” Schools varied in their specific implementation of PBIS, with some allowing students to earn credits for the school store or other concrete rewards, while others described a system of students earning merits and demerits.

Many improving Level 4 schools conducted multiple staff trainings and other professional development focused on the behavior plan to ensure consistency. Several schools, both current and exited, clearly display behavior norms in the hallways and classrooms, and teaching staff clearly communicate their expectations to students. One staff member commented, “*You have a culture and climate in that building [the school] that is spot on; the children and the adults both know what the non-negotiables are in that building.*” Classroom observation scores²⁴ in the high range for behavior at the improving schools suggest that behavior plans are clearly communicated to teachers and consistently implemented across classrooms.

Challenges. All of the struggling Level 4 schools named consistency of implementation of behavior expectations as a major challenge to improvement. One staff member remarked, “*The rules have changed a lot throughout the year, of how teachers are supposed to follow up with student behavior. I think a lot of what you do as a classroom teacher is [that] you manage just within the classroom.*” In addition, multiple principals from exited schools named consistency of behavior plan implementation as one of their top five challenges while designated as Level 4, and a few indicated that it is one of the top challenges with which they continue to struggle since exiting. Staff at several current Level 4 schools also mentioned the lack of a plan for students with more significant behavior needs as a challenge in this area.

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Most exited Level 4 schools and all improving current Level 4 schools provide a number of academic and nonacademic expanded learning opportunities to students, including most commonly, afterschool tutoring.

²⁴ The average MSV classroom observation score for the Behavior Management dimension (part of the Classroom Organization domain) was 6.1 in the improving schools and 5.0 in the struggling schools.

Turnaround Practice 4. School climate and culture	
Indicator 4.3 Expanded learning	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, all students have access to expanded learning opportunities that are well defined and well supported. High-need students are targeted for participation in these programs.

Regarding nonacademic opportunities, staff members at exited and improving current Level 4 schools named a variety of clubs, activities, and athletic programs that included, but were not limited to, Girl and Boy Scouts, theatre, and robotics club. One teacher said students can even create activities: “[*The principal gave students*] the opportunity to write a proposal. They have to find a teacher mentor that’s willing to offer the classrooms and to be there after school with them. That’s another opportunity after school if they want something that we don’t offer.” Staff members at most exited schools also said that students were able to enroll in summer instruction. The wide range of expanded learning opportunities seen at improving current Level 4 schools contrasts sharply with the limited opportunities offered at struggling Level 4 schools.

In addition to offering a wide range of opportunities, improving schools often offer programs outside the regular school day that target the needs of a variety of students, such as students struggling academically, students with additional social-emotional needs, and students above grade level. Staff members at both improving and exited schools said that students were targeted for participation based on data, including attendance, test results, grades, and teacher observations of the student’s overall progress. Referring to how he became involved in a program, a student at one improving school said, “*If it wasn’t for my teacher that recommended me, I probably wouldn’t have went into the program, and my grades probably wouldn’t be as good.*” In general, struggling schools have fewer expanded learning opportunities available and were less likely to describe targeting their afterschool programming to specific student needs than improving schools.

One factor that contributed to the successful implementation of expanded learning opportunities at exited Level 4 schools was effectively engaging external partnerships. Surveyed principals from 12 exited schools reported that having external partnerships focused on curriculum and instruction, including offering academically-focused expanded learning activities, contributed to their school’s ability to improve student performance and exit Level 4 status. Staff members at exited schools named a wide variety of external partners that provided expanded learning opportunities. For example, at one school, local universities sent student volunteers to provide afterschool tutoring. At another school, a partnership with the Boston Debate League provided students with debate team experiences, including the opportunity to learn a new skill and travel to compete at other schools. Although one struggling Level 4 school has an external provider leading a tutoring program, the program is reportedly not effective.

Challenges. As noted earlier, struggling current Level 4 schools have fewer expanded learning opportunities available to students, and some are just in the planning stages of trying to engage partners to introduce more programs to their students. A staff member from one school said, “*There needs to be a real infusion of resources and I don’t feel that that’s happening. If there were, we would have a before- and after-school formalized, operational, well-disciplined, tutoring program.*” Participation was noted as the most common challenge related to implementing expanded learning opportunities, particularly for current Level 4 schools. For

example, one current Level 4 school serves less than three dozen students with their afterschool program. To encourage student participation in their afterschool program, one exited Level 4 school provided late transportation home. Another exited school encouraged student participation by giving incoming eighth graders an orientation on the programs available to ninth- and 10th-grade students. This school also required students to attend an afterschool life skills course if they had found a job through the school’s external partnership.

Family Engagement

Staff members at improving Level 4 schools described the ways they engaged parents in planning for and collaborating in the implementation of academic and nonacademic supports.

Turnaround Practice 4. School climate and culture	
Indicator 4.5 Family and community engagement	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, the school makes family and community engagement a priority and all of the following five conditions are met: (1) One or more staff members coordinate family and community engagement activities; (2) regular social events are planned throughout the year to engage families and community members; (3) regular activities are planned throughout the year to engage families and community members in planning for and collaborating in the implementation of academic and nonacademic supports; (4) staff members routinely reach out to families to communicate information about their children’s progress and needs; and (5) communications with families are made available in multiple languages, as needed.

At most schools, teachers frequently communicate with parents about student needs, such as attendance and behavior concerns. Describing how parents were engaged in improving student attendance, one staff member said they are “*engaging parents in thinking about, ... ‘You’re allowing your child to stay home, [X number of] days. Well, those days, equal these many hours’ ... Showing the families, ‘Your child is at risk based on the data. This is the number of days.’ Really getting the parents more involved with helping them, supporting them, and bringing [their kids] to school.*” Teachers communicate about student progress and setbacks through phone calls, e-mails, letters, informal conversations, and parent conferences. Staff said that school leadership have made frequent, documented communication with parents an expectation. As one teacher elaborated, “*We, as a staff, are required to do ten phone calls home every week and actually log them on our system, on our dean’s list system. These phone calls don’t have to be negative. We often actually want them to be positive, so we find positive feedback for our students and share it with their families.*” Staff at many schools reported that offering communication materials in multiple languages also helps them engage family members.

Staff at both improving and struggling schools reported having a parent liaison at the school who is responsible for planning family events and outreach to parents. This role includes learning the background and needs of the families, locating and coordinating translation services as needed for school documents, and making contact with families through phone calls or other communication. One improving school lost its parent coordinator role and reported that this posed a challenge for the staff as the responsibility of coordinating family events became an additional task for other staff members. Parents of students in current Level 4 schools also have the opportunity to provide feedback on schoolwide supports or events through parent teacher

organizations or other teaming structures. For their school’s decision-making team, one school leader said that at least one parent member “*will come and bring any issues that [parents] may be concerned about or suggestions that they may have and speak for the parents all around.*”

Many improving schools were proactive about communicating with parents. Teachers at these schools routinely reached out through phone calls and home visits to build a relationship, giving parents positive information about their children and breaking down negative associations some of the parents previously had held about the school. At one improving Level 4 school, teachers now use phone calls and home visits to build a positive connection to the school: “*A lot of these parents have not had good experiences with schools, whether it was when they were little or family members. We’re trying to get them to feel that this is an open door. Come on in. We’d love to talk to you.*” In another school, teachers recalled contacting parents “*at the beginning of the year to introduce ourselves and create a connection, get the parent on your side, create a relationship at the beginning of the school year,*” so that there is a relationship in place that teachers can “*refer back to as the school year goes on.*” A different improving school has been creating opportunities for parents “*to come in to share their cultures with us, [and] doing a little work around cultural diversity.*” These strategies engage parents in meaningful one-on-one relationships with the teachers and invite parents to contribute to the school community.

Challenges. Although all schools had some common supports in planning family events, evidence suggests that struggling Level 4 schools have difficulty overcoming challenges. To start, social events for families do not occur regularly and staff members reported that family engagement events are often sporadic and informal. Furthermore, staff from struggling schools described especially low attendance at family events that are scheduled. Staff members at one school described parent turnout as “*dismal.*” Describing barriers to effective parent engagement, one staff member said, “*I think some parents, a handful, have been reached out to, but I don’t really see us, I don’t know if the parents really feel welcomed here. I don’t think our community feels welcomed here.*” Other staff members at this school attributed ineffective family engagement to having few family activities and a lack of communication with parents because of low response rates for parent contact information.

Recognizing that family engagement can be a challenge for many schools, to overcome similar barriers, one exited school principal reported that the school started doing community walks and home visits to develop better relationships with families. To involve parents in providing academic supports to students, another principal said, “*Our school has restructured our open house model to engage our parents in their child’s learning. Teachers share classroom data on two to three specific skills and then model and share activity materials with parents that they can do to help support the skill presented.*”

Sustaining Improvement

All but one exited school, both those continuing to show improvement and those that have stalled or even declined in some ways, indicated that since exiting Level 4, they have tried to sustain all of the turnaround strategies implemented before exit.

Turnaround Practice 1. Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration	
Indicator 1.8 Sustainability	At the <i>sustaining</i> level, school leadership implements strategies (e.g., succession plan, distributed leadership, new funding streams) for ensuring improvement efforts will be sustained over time or under new leadership. Majority of staff believe and can describe specific strategies that will enable the school to continue to improve, even with changes in staff or school leadership.

However, when asked which strategies have been most critical to their efforts to sustain improvement over time, responses from the eight schools continuing to show improvement (continuous improvement schools) differed from the five schools struggling to maintain improvement. In general, schools continuing to show improvement identified a few *specific* turnaround strategies that especially impacted their ability to sustain improvement efforts since exiting Level 4. In contrast, responses from two of the five schools struggling to maintain improvement indicated that all turnaround strategies were of equal importance to maintain after exiting Level 4, which suggests a lack of prioritization that may impede continued improvement. According to one principal from a school struggling to maintain improvement after exiting Level 4: “*They [the turnaround strategies] were all significant to the overall improvement of the school.*”

Specific strategies prioritized by schools continuing to show improvement included:

- Use of autonomy, particularly with regard to school-day and school-year scheduling, to maintain consistent instructional expectations. Half of the eight continuous improvement schools, for example, mentioned the importance of using time during the school day for collaboration and professional development, anchored in shared instructional expectations, whereas only one of the five stalled or declining schools explicitly mentioned the importance of building in time for collaboration or professional development. The notion of building in time *during the school day* is important to note, given some of these schools lost extended-day options once exiting Level 4 status.
- Use of a tiered system of academic and nonacademic supports to efficiently and effectively identify and address student needs. Nearly all continuous improvement schools identified a functional tiered system of supports as critical to the school’s ability to sustain continuous improvement since exiting Level 4, whereas only one of the five stalled or declining schools mentioned the importance of a tiered system of supports on the school’s ability to sustain improvement efforts

Challenges. Establishing a tiered system of supports was a top challenge cited by surveyed principals from stalled or declining schools in terms of improving when in Level 4 and the most commonly cited challenge to sustaining improvement efforts across time. One principal explained, “*Implementing a tiered system of supports was a challenge considering the large number of students, the limited amount of staff, limited training on behalf of the staff, the amount of time that testing interfered with instruction... also, the lack of trained subs to take the place of professional teachers going for training sessions.*” In contrast, only two principals from continuous improvement schools identified establishing a tiered system of supports as a top challenge.

In addition to challenges related to establishing effective tiered systems of supports, principals from stalled or declining schools identified other challenges to improvement, both while in

Level 4 status and since exiting, which differed from those identified by principals from continuous improvement schools. Principals from two stalled or declining schools identified effectively using classroom data to improve instruction, providing adequate time for teachers to collaborate and use data, and offering training on how to identify student needs as top challenges to improving while in Level 4, whereas no principals from continuous improvement schools identified these areas as key challenges. Surveyed principals from two stalled or declining exited schools also said their reduced autonomy with regard to establishing budget priorities based on school needs has inhibited improvement since exiting Level 4, whereas no surveyed principals from improving schools said reduced budget autonomy had inhibited improvement.

The *Turnaround Practices Field Guide* being developed along with this report will provide additional details and insights into the specific strategies implemented by schools continuing to show improvement over time, as well as practical lessons from those schools about how to address and overcome common challenges associated with loss of autonomy and funding once a school exits Level 4 status and SRG funds expire.

Limitations

This research had three notable limitations: the number of available schools for the “improving” and “struggling” schools sample, the content of the extant MSV data, and the size of the exited school sample. Each of these limitations is discussed below.

“Improving” and “Struggling” Current Level 4 Schools

The methodology used to select our sample of “improving” and “struggling” schools ensured that we could identify, from the set, specific strategies for improvement prevalent in Level 4 schools on the path to exit, as evidenced by high MSV ratings and a positive trajectory over time (“improving” schools), and in contrast to strategies implemented in schools failing to show improvement, even after multiple years in turnaround (“struggling”). This methodology purposely excluded schools in the middle (neither improving nor declining), schools showing mixed results from one year to the next, and newly identified Level 4 schools that may not be showing improvement but should not yet be deemed struggling. Many of the schools that would have been considered improving, based on our criteria, exited Level 4 prior to the 2014–15 MSVs and this study. As a result, the final sample was quite small (five improving schools and five struggling schools), especially considering the unique context and characteristics of each school. Given that most of the Level 4 schools in Massachusetts are elementary schools, middle and high school representation in the final sample was limited. Although we present only those findings that emerged across multiple schools, the limited sample size should be kept in mind, along with the recognition that the methodology precludes us from making causal inferences.

Extant MSV Data

Given the richness of the MSV data available, reflecting a wide range of stakeholder perspectives on the turnaround process, the primary data source used for these analyses was extant MSV data. Relying on these data, however, has its limitations. For example, only one year of MSV data (2014–15) was closely aligned with the turnaround practices and indicators used as a framework for this work, and included numerical ratings of implementation. Prior-year MSV data were informative but more difficult to align with the current turnaround practices and indicators, and a single year of implementation data (from the 2014–15 MSV) does not allow us to track progress over time. In addition, because the MSV data were collected before and apart from this project, there was no way to customize questions or probes related to the findings that emerged here; which means that sometimes the level of detail desired does not exist in the data set available. Although additional details and insights from exited schools were collected for the *Turnaround Practices Field Guide*, those interviews were far more narrowly focused than the more generalizable findings presented here.

Exited School Sample

We recognized the importance of ensuring the specific turnaround strategies highlighted herein reflected strategies used by schools that had already shown enough improvement to exit Level 4. Due to project constraints and a desire not to overburden staff from exited schools, we conducted a survey of exited school principals, as opposed to collecting MSV-like interview data from exited schools, to obtain information from already exited schools. However, because of the size

of the exited school sample—18 schools—we could not pilot the survey before administering it to the full sample. Unfortunately, closed-ended responses, which intentionally made up the majority of the survey in order to minimize burden on participants, showed less variation across respondents than anticipated, making it difficult to draw many conclusions. Still, in many cases, survey data confirmed findings that had already emerged from the qualitative analysis of MSV data. Interview and focus group data focused on specific strategies will be collected from staff in five exited schools for the *Turnaround Practices Field Guide*.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings presented in this report, ESE staff can reflect on supports provided to Level 4 schools, and the SRG program as it currently exists, and thoughtfully consider whether there are specific ways in which the supports or program can and should be improved to focus schools better on the specific turnaround-related activities that tend to lead to improved student outcomes. For example, based on findings from this evaluation, ESE may want to develop specific “look-fors” in SRG applications or renewals that go beyond the overall turnaround practices and focus on the specific strategies characteristic of improving and exited schools. ESE also may want to consider tailoring school- or district-specific supports to common challenges reported by struggling schools and described herein. The *Turnaround Practices Field Guide* also will provide schools with some guidance, by example, about how to put key turnaround strategies into practice and how to navigate common challenges.

Quantitative analyses, which are currently under way, may provide some additional insights into how changes in the SRG program across time have impacted turnaround efforts and lessons for awarding SRGs and supporting future recipients. At this time, we provide the following suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Targeted Turnaround Practices Implementation Survey. Now that we have identified specific strategies that characterize improving and continuous improvement schools, we can collect targeted survey information from staff at all current Level 4 schools to gather more information about how schools implement, or struggle to implement, the specific strategies of interest. Some topic areas may already be addressed in the MSV instructional staff survey that all Level 4 schools receive, and these extant data could be easily analyzed. New tailored and targeted survey items could be developed as needed for topic areas not addressed in the MSV survey using details gleaned from the analyses summarized in this report. For current Level 4 schools, survey data can be analyzed in terms of MSV ratings. For Level 3 schools, survey data may shed some light on targeted school needs by highlighting areas of low or no implementation.

Leading Indicators. As noted in the limitations, only a single year of MSV data linked directly to the current turnaround practices and indicators (with a numerical rating of implementation) were available for this evaluation. Using the same tool, the *Turnaround Practices and Indicators Continuum*, to gather additional years of MSV data will allow researchers to validate the tool by examining the relationship between MSV ratings and student outcomes—higher ratings should forecast improved student outcomes—and identify specific leading indicators or practices. In other words, are there certain indicators or turnaround practices where high levels of implementation are associated with improving or exited schools more often than other indicators or turnaround practices? And do these leading indicators vary by grade span, for example at the elementary, middle and high school level?

Instructional Quality. Additional years of data also will allow for further validation of the observation tool (Teachstone’s CLASS) used as a part of the MSV process through comparisons with both the turnaround practices and indicators ratings and student outcomes. To what extent can classroom observation data be used to predict a school’s likelihood of exiting Level 4?

Sustaining Improvement. As we know, only some exited schools have been able to sustain improvements across time. Collecting rich qualitative data from exited schools that have shown continuous improvement across time about the ways in which school leaders approached turnaround with sustainability in mind and maintained improvement efforts across time would provide valuable information about the keys to sustained success. This research should focus on identifying specific ways in which continuous improvement schools approach turnaround during the planning, early implementation, and exit eligibility phases. An analysis of exit assurances applications, for continuous improvement schools as compared with stalled or declining schools, may provide additional information about whether there are specific continued flexibilities typically associated with schools able to sustain improvements.

Use of Funds. Although some work already has been conducted in this area, additional research could be conducted to learn about how struggling, improving, and exited schools spend SRG funds, given the growing cadre of schools in each category. Comparing the various patterns of expenditure with turnaround practices and indicators ratings, classroom observation scores, and student outcomes would allow for the creation of an inventory of the most impactful patterns of SRG spending that may be useful for evaluating SRG applications and determining a school's likelihood of successful turnaround. This research also could look at the relationship between patterns of SRG spending and continuous improvement schools to learn more about how funding strategies impact a school's ability to sustain improvements across time once SRG funds have expired.

Appendix A. Codebook

Note: *Italics* indicate new nodes added to the codebook during coding process.

Challenges~Barriers
TP1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration
1.1 Use of Autonomy
Budget
Calendar
Partners
PD
Schedule
Staffing
Other
<i>Building layout</i>
1.2 High Expectations
For staff
For students
Positive regard between staff and students
Other
<i>Consistency</i>
<i>Hard to communicate to new staff</i>
1.3 Vision~Theory of Action
Sense of urgency to improve
Staff buy-in
Vision for improvement
Other
1.4 Monitoring School Progress
Benchmarks
Communication to staff
ILT role
Prioritization of goals
Other
<i>Data use</i>
1.5 Instructional Leadership and Improvement
Classroom observations
Coaching
Feedback
Teacher evaluation
Other
1.6 Time Use (by Teachers)
Collaboration
Data use

PD
Other
<i>Evaluation of time use</i>
1.7 Communication with Staff
Frequency
How
Topics
Two-way communication
Who
Other
TP2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction
2.1 Instructional Expectations (for Teachers)
Consistency implemented
How communicated
How monitored
Understanding
What are the expectations
Other
2.2 Instructional Schedule
Instructional time
Revisions to schedule
Teacher collaboration time
Time to meet with support staff
Who designs
Other
<i>No prep period</i>
2.3 Student Learning Needs Support (Academic)
Addressing needs
Data use
Frequency
Systems~Processes
Instructional Supports
Who
Other
<i>Communication with staff</i>
Identification of needs
Data use
Frequency
Systems~Processes

Who
Other
Other
2.4 Classroom Observation Data Use
Feedback
Frequency
How observation data used
Other
2.5 Student Assessment Data Use (by Leaders)
Frequency
How used
Which data
Who
Other
2.6 Teacher Progress Assessment Practices
Frequency
How used
Which data
Who - e.g. teams or individual
Other
2.7 Structures for Instructional Improvement
Coaching
Collaboration
Observations~Feedback
Student data use
Other
<i>Professional Development</i>
<i>Staffing</i>
TP3. Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students
3.1 Academic Interventions
Tiered system of support
What - by group
ELL
Far academically behind (but not other group)
Gifted
Low income
Problem behaviors
SPED
Other
<i>Not offered to upper grades</i>
Other
3.2 Teacher Identification of Student Needs

Identification of needs
Consistency implemented
Training
Who trained
Responding to needs
Consistency implemented
<i>Determined by grade level</i>
Training
Who trained
Other
3.3 Schoolwide Student Supports (Academic)
Frequency of data review
Supports adjusted
Other
3.4 Multitiered System of Supports
Process for decision~implementation
Who decides supports - e.g. team
Process for monitoring effectiveness
What needs - by type or group
Academic
Non-academic
Behavioral
Other
Special population
ELL
Other
SPED
Other
3.5 High Standards (Common Core or MA Curr Fmwks)
Feedback on impl of standards
Teachers use standards in instruction
Training on standards
Other
TP4. School Climate and Culture
4.1 Schoolwide Behavior Plan
Clear behavioral expectations
Clear structure for positive supports
Consistency of implementation
Monitoring of implementation or effectiveness
Training on plan
Other
4.2 Adult-Student Relationships

Delivering social emotional supports
Monitoring of social emotional supports
Structures to develop relationships
Advisories
Counseling
Mentoring
Other
Other
<i>Consistency</i>
<i>High student need</i>
4.3 Expanded Learning (beyond school day)
What opportunities
After school learning opportunities
<i>Limited opportunities</i>
Who participates -
<i>Students with low MCAS</i>
<i>Offered to a small number of students</i>
<i>Students do not participate</i>
Other
4.4 Wraparound Services
Monitoring of needs
Process for identification of need
System for providing
What services
Adult classes
Clothing or food
Counseling
Health
Housing
Other
Other
4.5 Trusting Relationships (among staff)
Collaboration activities
Determining instructional strategies
Examining student work
Intervention planning
Lesson planning
Student data review~progress monitoring
Opinion on coaching
Aligned~Helpful
Judgmental
Other

4.6 Community Engagement (Family Engagement)
Communications in multiple languages
Engage families in planning supports
Regular social events
Staff communicate about student needs
Staff coordination
Other

Factors
Autonomy
Budget
Calendar
PD
Schedule
Staffing
Other
District systems of support
Negative
Positive
Other
<i>Chart Grant</i>
<i>City Connects</i>
<i>City Year</i>
<i>New Tech Network</i>
<i>Project GRAD</i>
<i>Teach Plus</i>
<i>Time focused external partner</i>
<i>Up Network</i>
Staffing
State systems of support
Teacher evaluation system

TOP - Concrete Examples
TP1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration
1.1 Use of Autonomy
Budget
Calendar
Partners
PD
Schedule
Staffing
Other
<i>Curriculum</i>
1.2 High Expectations
For staff
For students
Positive regard between staff and students
Other
1.3 Vision~Theory of Action
Sense of urgency to improve
Staff buy-in
Vision for improvement
Other
1.4 Monitoring School Progress
Benchmarks
Communication to staff
ILT role
Prioritization of goals
Other
<i>Monitor Student Data</i>
1.5 Instructional Leadership and Improvement
Classroom observations
Coaching
Feedback
Teacher evaluation
Other
1.6 Time Use (by Teachers)
Collaboration
Data use
PD
Other
1.7 Communication with Staff
Frequency
How

Teacher Survey
Topics
Two-way communication
Who
Other
TP2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction
2.1 Instructional Expectations (for Teachers)
Consistency implemented
How communicated
How monitored
Understanding
What are the expectations
x. Other -
2.2 Instructional Schedule
Instructional time
Revisions to schedule
Teacher collaboration time
Time to meet with support staff
Who designs
Other
2.3 Student Learning Needs Support (Academic)
Addressing needs
Data use
Frequency
Systems~Processes
Who
Other
Identification of needs
Data use
Frequency
Systems~Processes
Who
Other
Other
2.4 Classroom Observation Data Use
Feedback
Frequency
How observation data used
Other
2.5 Student Assessment Data Use (by Leaders)
Frequency
How used

Which data
Who
Other
2.6 Teacher Progress Assessment Practices
Frequency
How used
Which data
Who - e.g. teams or individual
Other
2.7 Structures for Instructional Improvement
Coaching
Collaboration
Observations~Feedback
Student data use
Other
<i>External partners</i>
<i>Training</i>
TP3. Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students
3.1 Academic Interventions
Tiered system of support
What - by group
ELL
Far academically behind (but not other group)
Gifted
Low income
Problem behaviors
SPED
Other
Other
3.2 Teacher Identification of Student Needs
Identification of needs
Consistency implemented
Training
Who trained
Responding to needs
Consistency implemented
Training
Who trained
Other
3.3 Schoolwide Student Supports (Academic)
Frequency of data review
Supports adjusted

Other
<i>ELL support</i>
3.4 Multitiered System of Supports
Process for decision~implementation
Who decides supports - e.g. team
Process for monitoring effectiveness
What needs - by type or group
Academic
Non-academic
Behavioral
Other
Special population
ELL
Other
SPED
Other
3.5 High Standards (Common Core or MA Curr Fmwks)
Feedback on impl of standards
Teachers use standards in instruction
Training on standards
Other
TP4. School Climate and Culture
4.1 Schoolwide Behavior Plan
Clear behavioral expectations
Clear structure for positive supports
Consistency of implementation
Monitoring of implementation or effectiveness
Training on plan
Other
4.2 Adult-Student Relationships
Delivering social emotional supports
Monitoring of social emotional supports
Structures to develop relationships
Advisories
Counseling
Mentoring
Other
<i>Informal social time</i>
<i>Partners in Education, check-ins</i>
<i>Positive reinforcements</i>
<i>Scholarly Entry, morning check-in</i>
<i>Teachers set positive climate</i>

<i>Training on building relationships</i>
Other
4.3 Expanded Learning (beyond school day)
What opportunities
<i>Afterschool program</i>
<i>Afterschool tutoring</i>
<i>Athletic programs</i>
<i>Clubs and activities</i>
<i>Community Programs</i>
<i>Enrichment Period</i>
<i>Gifted and Talented program</i>
<i>Summer instruction</i>
Who participates
<i>Above grade level students</i>
<i>ELL</i>
<i>High need students, academic</i>
Other
4.4 Wraparound Services
Monitoring of needs
Process for identification of need
System for providing
What services
Adult classes
Clothing or food
Counseling
Health
Housing

Other
Other
4.5 Trusting Relationships (among staff)
Collaboration activities
Determining instructional strategies
Examining student work
Intervention planning
Lesson planning
Student data review~progress monitoring
Opinion on coaching
Aligned~Helpful
Judgmental
Other
4.6 Community Engagement (Family Engagement)
Communications in multiple languages
Engage families in planning supports
Regular social events
Staff communicate about student needs
Staff coordination
Other
BOTTOM - Positives
TP1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration
TP2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction
TP3. Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students
TP4. School Climate and Culture

Appendix B. Exited School Survey

The most commonly administered exited school survey is included here to illustrate the types of questions asked of exited school principals. Slight variations of this survey were administered depending on the principal's tenure at the school. For example current Level 4 school principals who came to the school after the school exited Level 4 status were asked only about strategies implemented to sustain improvement efforts, over time, and challenges to improvement since exiting. Former principals were not asked about current efforts to sustain improvement.

Exited School Survey (L4/SRG Impact Evaluation)

Introduction

You are invited to complete this survey as one of 18 Massachusetts public school principals (or former principals) involved in successful school turnaround efforts that led to exiting Level 4 status. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes of your time and is critical to building the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE) understanding of how and why some struggling schools are able to improve while others stagnate or continue to decline.

Background. Based on research suggesting that School Redesign Grants (SRGs) have a significant positive impact on a struggling school's ability to improve, ESE has contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a follow-up evaluation of school turnaround efforts in Level 4 schools and schools that have received School Redesign Grants (SRGs). Your responses to this survey will provide invaluable information about what successful turnaround schools do to improve student outcomes.

Confidentiality. Your responses to the questions on this survey will be made available to the AIR project team only and reported to ESE in aggregate. No individual responses will be reported to ESE or shared beyond the AIR project team in any other way.

Contact Information. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the project director, Laura Stein, by email at lstein@air.org or by phone 640-649-6608. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact IRBChair@air.org or call toll-free 1-800-634-0797.

Thank you for your participation!

1a. How long have you worked in this district?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

2a. How long have you worked at this school?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

Implementation of Turnaround Practices and Indicators as a Level 4 school

Over the past several years, ESE has been working with researchers to identify common practices in schools that have experienced rapid improvements in student outcomes. Four evidence-based turnaround practice areas emerged from this work.

Turnaround Practices	
1.	Establishing a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility for all students, and professional collaboration
2.	Employing intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction
3.	Providing student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs.
4.	Ensuring a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers.

To help ESE better understand how these turnaround practices can be effectively implemented, the next several questions focus on specific strategies or initiatives related to each turnaround practice. For each strategy or initiative described below, think about how important, if at all, the strategy – or any part of the strategy – was to your school’s improvement efforts, which led to exiting Level 4 status. Select “Of Little or No Importance” for any strategies not implemented or not applicable to your school. Select “Essential” for any strategies absolutely integral to your school’s ability to improve and exit Level 4 status.

3a. Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to leadership, shared responsibility and professional collaboration (Turnaround Practice 1) was to your school’s improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.

Specific Strategy or Initiative Related to Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Collaboration	Importance				
	Of Little or No Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Essential*	I Don't Know
a. School leaders used autonomy (e.g., staffing, schedule, budgetary) and authority to focus work on implementing improvement efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. School leaders implemented strategies or activities to ensure high expectations and positive regard between leadership, staff, and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. School staff demonstrated shared ownership and collective responsibility for improving student achievement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. School leaders actively engaged in continuously and systematically monitoring implementation of turnaround efforts and used this information to prioritize initiatives and strategies, communicate progress and challenges, and seek input from staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. School staff established a climate of respectful collegial communication, relationships, and leadership to help each other continually improve their practice and increase student achievement throughout the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

f. School leaders ensured that the schedule included adequate time for professional development opportunities and collaboration for most teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. School leaders established formal structures to build effective staff relationships that balanced transparency and open, two-way communication across staff and school teams and between administrators and staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. School leaders implemented strategies to build staff capacity (e.g., succession plan, distributed leadership, new funding streams) to help ensure improvement efforts could be sustained over time or under new leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. School leaders promoted collective, distributed leadership structures and practices through an active and well-represented Instructional Leadership Team and grade-level or vertical teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3b. Please describe any other strategies or initiatives, related to leadership, shared responsibility and professional collaboration (Turnaround Practice 1) but not reflected in Question 3, that were essential to your school’s ability to improve and exit Level 4 status. [open-ended]

4a. Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to intentional practices for improving instruction (Turnaround Practice 2) was to your school’s improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.

Specific Strategy or Initiative Related to Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction	Of Little or No Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Essential*	I Don’t Know
a. School leaders identified a clear instructional focus and shared expectations for instructional best practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. School leaders developed instructional schedules in collaboration with teachers and ensured that instructional support staff were coordinated and aligned across grade levels and content areas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. School staff used formal teaming and collaboration strategies, processes (e.g., instructional leadership team, collaborative planning, professional learning communities), and protocols to address individual students’ academic needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Instructional leaders conducted frequent (weekly or daily) classroom observations focused on strengthening teachers’ instructional practices and provided specific and actionable feedback on the quality and effectiveness of instruction to individual teachers and teacher teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Instructional leaders used data from classroom observations to inform instructional conversations and the provision of targeted and individualized supports (e.g., coaching) for teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. School leaders consistently used student results on benchmark and common assessments and state assessments to make decisions regarding schoolwide practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

g. Teachers used and analyzed a variety of student-specific data, both individually and collaboratively, to assess the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and practices and modify instruction to meet students' needs.	○	○	○	○	○
h. School leaders strategically used structures, practices, and resources (e.g., collaborative meeting time, coaching, supports for implementing the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks) to support data-driven instruction, research-based instructional strategies, and differentiation.	○	○	○	○	○

4b. Please describe any other strategies or initiatives, related to intentional practices for improving instruction (Turnaround Practice 2) but not reflected in Question 4, that were essential to your school's ability to improve and exit Level 4 status. [open-ended]

5a. Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to student-specific supports (Turnaround Practice 3) was to your school's improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.

Specific Strategy or Initiative Related to Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students	Of Little or No Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Essential*	I Don't Know
a. School staff used a variety of ongoing assessments (formative, benchmark, and summative) to frequently and continually assess instructional effectiveness and to identify students' individual academic needs in order to provide student-specific interventions and supports.	○	○	○	○	○
b. School leaders implemented research-based academic interventions, appropriate to student needs, systematically during regularly scheduled school time and for all core content areas through a robust tiered system of support.	○	○	○	○	○
c. Enrichment opportunities were made available to all students and implemented systematically during regularly scheduled school time.	○	○	○	○	○
d. Staff members were provided with training and support to ensure that they could: (1) identify cues when students need additional assistance (both academic and nonacademic) and (2) respond appropriately to those cues.	○	○	○	○	○
e. School staff employed a system (structures, practices, and use of resources) for providing targeted instructional interventions and supports to all students, including the ongoing monitoring of the impact of tiered interventions.	○	○	○	○	○
f. All English language learners experienced research-based academic interventions appropriate for their specific needs.	○	○	○	○	○
g. All students with disabilities experienced research-based academic interventions appropriate for their specific needs.	○	○	○	○	○

5b. Please describe any other strategies or initiatives, related to student-specific supports (Turnaround Practice 3) but not reflected in Question 5, that were essential to your school's ability to improve and exit Level 4 status. [open-ended]

6a. Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to school climate and culture (Turnaround Practice 4) was to your school’s improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.

Specific Strategy or Initiative Related to School Climate and Culture	Of Little or No Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Essential*	I Don’t Know
a. School staff clearly established and actively pursued a set of behavioral expectations and practices that supports students' learning and efforts to increase student achievement.	○	○	○	○	○
b. School leaders established structures (e.g., structured advisories, mentor programs) to support relationships among students and adults.	○	○	○	○	○
c. School leaders established structures to deliver social-emotional supports.	○	○	○	○	○
d. Well-defined and well-supported expanded learning opportunities (e.g., afterschool and during the summer) were made available to all students and specifically targeted to high-need students.	○	○	○	○	○
e. School staff shared individual and mutual responsibility for building the capacity of families to support education through a systemic system of wraparound services (e.g., health, housing referrals) and assessed the needs of students and families throughout the school year.	○	○	○	○	○
f. School staff made family and community engagement a priority and provided opportunities for families and the community to participate school decision-making and social activities.	○	○	○	○	○

6b. Please describe any other strategies or initiatives, related to school climate and culture (Turnaround Practice 4) but not reflected in Question 6, that were essential to your school’s ability to improve and exit Level 4 status. [open-ended]

Factors that Impacted Your School’s Ability to Engage in Successful Turnaround

As a Level 4 school, you and your school may have been afforded certain autonomies and flexibilities to change the conditions in which you engaged in school turnaround efforts. Similarly, your school may have received support from external partners, district staff, and/or state officials. This set of questions asks you to reflect upon the extent to which these factors—autonomies and external supports—actively contributed to your improvement efforts, inhibited or served as a barrier to improvement efforts, or neither inhibited nor contributed to your work.

7a. How did the following factors affect your school’s ability to improve student performance and subsequently exit Level 4 status?

Factors: Autonomies	<u>Inhibited</u> Improvement	Neither inhibited nor contributed to improvement	<u>Contributed</u> to Improvement	I Don’t Know
Staffing Autonomies				
a. Ability to determine staffing roles and assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Ability to <u>recruit and hire</u> highly-qualified staff that meet school’s needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Ability to <u>remove</u> staff who do not meet performance standards and/or school needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scheduling and Budget Autonomies				
a. Ability to control the school day schedule for <u>students</u> (e.g., instruction, start and end time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Ability to control the school day schedule for <u>staff</u> (e.g., individual and collaborative planning time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Ability to control the school calendar for student learning, (e.g., extended school year, vacation academies, expanded learning opportunities).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Ability to control the professional development calendar for staff, e.g., to determine the number of PD days per year, control of the professional development topic,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Having additional time (e.g., extended day)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Ability to establish budget priorities based on school needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7b. For each factor that “inhibited improvement,” please describe how, if at all, you or other staff at your school were able to minimize or overcome the inhibiting factor. [Open-ended]

Factors: External Supports	<u>Inhibited Improvement</u>	Neither inhibited nor contributed to improvement	<u>Contributed to Improvement</u>	I Don't Know
External Partners				
a. Having external partnerships focused on curriculum and instruction (in any content area)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Having external partnerships focused on students' social/emotional needs, including mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Having external partnerships focused on wrap around services, including health services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Having external partnerships focused on parent and community engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District Systems of Support				
a. District systems of support for planning and/or implementing turnaround strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. District systems of support for monitoring implementation of turnaround strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. District-level support for recruiting and hiring highly-qualified staff in a timely fashion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. District-level coaching, professional development, and/or content support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. District leaders' capacity to support turnaround efforts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. District leaders' commitment to support turnaround efforts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Communication between district-level staff and school staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. School board involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State Systems of Support				
a. State systems of support for planning and/or implementing turnaround strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. State systems of support for monitoring implementation of turnaround strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. State-provided professional development and/or content support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Other: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7c. For each factor that “inhibited improvement,” please describe how, if at all, you or other staff at your school were able to minimize or overcome the inhibiting factor. [Open-ended]

Barriers/Challenges to Improvement

8. Select the biggest challenges (up to 5) related to improving student performance that your school faced as a Level 4 school and briefly describe how your school addressed this challenge.

	Challenge or Barrier	Strategy for Addressing Challenge or Barrier [OPEN-ENDED]
Turnaround Practice 1. to Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Collaboration		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using staffing autonomy to focus work on implementing turnaround plan and/or improving quality of teaching and learning	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using other autonomies (e.g., scheduling or budgetary) to focus work on implementing turnaround plan and/or improving quality of teaching and learning	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicating and instilling a school-wide vision for improvement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creating effective systems to facilitate two-way communication between school leaders and teachers	
Turnaround Practice 2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently implementing and monitoring high expectations for all teachers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conducting classroom observations and communicating feedback to teachers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Effectively using classroom observation data to improve instruction	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing adequate time for instruction	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing adequate time for teachers to collaborate and use data	
Turnaround Practice 3. Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying <u>academic</u> student needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying <u>non-academic</u> student needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing training on how to identify student needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing processes and using data to address <u>academic</u> student needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing processes and using data to address <u>non-academic</u> student needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing a tiered system of supports for students in need of academic interventions and adjusting schoolwide academic supports	
Turnaround Practice 4. School Climate and Culture		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently implementing a schoolwide behavior plan	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Effectively delivering social-emotional supports to students	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing opportunities for students to participate in expanded learning	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing a system for providing wraparound services to students	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engaging family and community members	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____	

[Open-ended response field for describing how school addressed each of the top 5 challenges]

Implementation of TPs and Indicators since Exiting Level 4

To this point in the survey, we have asked about your school’s prior experience as a Level 4 school and how your school used certain practices and autonomies to engage in a successful turnaround effort and ultimately exit Level 4 status.

We now want to learn about your experience since exiting Level 4 status, focusing specifically on key practices that you have found to be important and effective in sustaining your school’s improvement efforts, as well as factors (such as staffing flexibility) that may have posed a challenge to your ongoing improvement efforts.

9. Please reflect upon the Turnaround Practices listed here and that have been referenced throughout this survey.

Turnaround Practices	
1.	Establishing a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility for all students, and professional collaboration
2.	Employing intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction
3.	Providing student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs.
4.	Ensuring a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers.

As your school has worked to sustain your improvement, are there particular practices and/or school-specific strategies or initiatives related to one or more of these practices that you feel has played a crucial and significantly important role in your school’s success? In other words, what did you do at your school that really made a difference? Please briefly describe each of the practices that you feel has played a crucial and significantly important role in your school’s continued success since exiting Level 4 status. [OPEN ENDED RESPONSE]

10. Which specific strategies or initiatives, if any, have you intentionally discontinued since exiting Level 4 status? Please explain why. [OPEN ENDED RESPONSE]

11. When your school’s SRG funds expired, how, if at all, did each of the following impact your school’s ability to sustain improvements?

	<u>No Impact on Ability to Sustain Improvement</u>	<u>Somewhat Inhibited Improvement</u>	<u>Greatly Inhibited Improvement</u>
Loss of grant funded staff positions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for extended time for students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for extended time for staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for external partners that support student learning/instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for external partners that support staff professional development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for external partners that	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

support students' social/emotional needs, including mentoring			
Loss of grant funds for external partners that support wrap around services, including health services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for afterschool programming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of grant funds for supplies/technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Factors that Currently Influence Your School's Ability to Sustain Turnaround Efforts

In the following section please reflect upon the autonomies that you may have had while a Level 4 school and consider two questions: (1) How, if at all, has your autonomy in each area changed since exiting Level 4 and (2) How has you current level of autonomy in each are affected your school's ability to sustain improvements?

	12a. How, if at all, has your level of autonomy changed <u>since exiting Level 4 status</u> ?			12b. How has your current level of autonomy affected your school's ability to sustain improvements <u>since exiting Level 4 status</u> ?		
	<u>Less Autonomy</u>	<u>No Change in Level of Autonomy</u>	<u>More Autonomy</u>	<u>Inhibited Improvement</u>	<u>Neither inhibited nor contributed to improvement</u>	<u>Contributed to Improvement</u>
Staffing Autonomies						
Ability to determine staffing roles and assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to <u>recruit and hire</u> highly-qualified staff that meet school's needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to <u>remove</u> staff who do not meet performance standards and/or school needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scheduling and Other Autonomies						
Ability to control the school day schedule for <u>students</u> (e.g., instruction, start and end time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to control the school day schedule for <u>staff</u> (e.g., individual and collaborative planning time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to control the school calendar for student learning, (e.g., extended school year, vacation academies,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

expanded learning opportunities). professional development)						
Ability to control the professional development calendar for staff, e.g., to determine the number of PD days per year, control of the professional development topic,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to establish budget priorities based on school needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. How has each of the following other factors affected your school's ability to sustain improvements since exiting Level 4 status?

Factors: External Supports	<u>Inhibited Improvement</u>	<u>Neither inhibited nor contributed to improvement</u>	<u>Contributed to Improvement</u>
External Partners			
Having external partnerships focused on curriculum and instruction (in any content area)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having external partnerships focused on students' social/emotional needs, including mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having external partnerships focused on wrap around services, including health services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having external partnerships focused on parent and community engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District Systems of Support			
District systems of support for planning and/or implementing improvement strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District systems of support for monitoring implementation of improvement strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District-level support for recruiting and hiring highly-qualified staff in a timely fashion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District-level coaching, professional development, and/or content support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District leaders' capacity to sustain improvement efforts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District leaders' commitment to sustain improvement efforts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication between district-level staff and school staff			
School board involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State Systems of Support			
State systems of support for planning and/or implementing improvement strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State systems of support for monitoring implementation of improvement strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

State-provided professional development and/or content support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Earlier, you were asked to identify the biggest challenges related to improving student performance that your school faced as a Level 4 school. Now, please select the biggest challenges (up to 5) related to sustaining student performance that your school continues to struggle with.

Challenge or Barrier	
Turnaround Practice 1. to Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Collaboration	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using staffing autonomy to improve quality of teaching
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using other autonomies (e.g., budget, schedule) to improve quality of teaching and learning
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicating and instilling a school-wide vision for improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creating or maintaining effective systems to facilitate two-way communication between school leaders and teachers
Turnaround Practice 2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently implementing and monitoring high expectations for all teachers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conducting classroom observations and communicating feedback to teachers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Effectively using classroom observation data to improve instruction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing adequate time for instruction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing adequate time for teachers to collaborate and use data
Turnaround Practice 3. Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying <u>academic</u> student needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying <u>non-academic</u> student needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently providing training on how to identify student needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using student data to effectively address <u>academic</u> student needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using student data to effectively address <u>non-academic</u> student needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently using a tiered system of supports for students in need of academic interventions and adjusting schoolwide academic supports
Turnaround Practice 4. School Climate and Culture	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently implementing a schoolwide behavior plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	Effectively delivering social-emotional supports to students
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing opportunities for students to participate in expanded learning
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing or improving a system for providing wraparound services to students
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engaging family and community members
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

15. In addition to sharing findings about the impact of SRGs on school improvement, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) wants to facilitate the sharing of best practices for successfully implementing – and maintaining – improvement strategies related to the four key turnaround practice areas. In an effort to do that, ESE has contracted with AIR to identify schools that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- School is maintaining a focus on improvement without the requirements that govern schools identified as Level 4 and/or the additional funds and flexibilities that accompany receiving an SRG, AND/OR
- School is doing an exceptional job coordinating or managing strategies and systems for improvement and creating the conditions for all staff to support student achievement.

If your school is demonstrating an innovative or extraordinary commitment to one or both of the above criteria, please briefly describe your school’s efforts below. In your response, you may want to note some of the “essential” strategies for improvement that you identified earlier, or the ways in which your school is effectively addressing challenges, or ensuring that the loss of SRG funds does *not* inhibit continued improvement. AIR, in coordination with ESE, will select between four and six schools to showcase as part of a field guide of best practices for school turnaround. Let your school be a model for other schools across the state of how improvement can be attained and sustained! [Insert open-ended response field.]

Thank you for completing the survey!

Appendix C. Exited School Survey Data

Exited school leaders reported that implementing strategies to ensure high expectations and using their autonomy to focus work on implementing improvement efforts were the most important practices in Turnaround Practice Area 1 related to their schools' improvement.

Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration (Turnaround Practice 1) was to your school's improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.		Rank Order	Average Score*
School leaders implemented strategies or activities to ensure high expectations and positive regard among leadership, staff, and students.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 3 Essential = 14	1	0.94
School leaders used autonomy (e.g., staffing, schedule, budgetary) and authority to focus work on implementing improvement efforts.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 4 Essential = 13	2	0.92
School staff demonstrated shared ownership and collective responsibility for improving student achievement.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 5 Essential = 12	3	0.90
School leaders ensured that the schedule included adequate time for professional development opportunities and collaboration for most teachers.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 5 Essential = 12	3	0.90
School leaders actively engaged in continuously and systematically monitoring implementation of turnaround efforts and used this information to prioritize initiatives and strategies, communicate progress and challenges, and seek input from staff.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 6 Essential = 11	5	0.88
School leaders implemented strategies to build staff capacity (e.g., succession plan, distributed leadership, new funding streams) to help ensure improvement efforts could be sustained over time or under new leadership.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 6 Essential = 11	5	0.88
School leaders promoted collective, distributed leadership structures and practices through an active and well-represented instructional leadership team and grade-level or vertical teams.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 6 Essential = 11	5	0.88
School staff established a climate of respectful collegial communication, relationships, and leadership to help each other continually improve their practice and increase student achievement throughout the school.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 7 Essential = 10	8	0.86
School leaders established formal structures to build effective staff relationships that balanced transparency and open, two-way communication across staff and school teams and between administrators and staff.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 12 Essential = 5	9	0.76

*The average score ranges from 0 to 1, with an average score of 1 meaning all respondents chose "essential" and an average score of 0 meaning all respondents chose "of little" importance.

Exited school leaders reported that identifying clear instructional foci and expectations and strategically supporting data-driven instruction and research-based instructional strategies were the most important practices in Turnaround Practice Area 2 related to their schools' improvement.

Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to intentional practices for improving instruction (Turnaround Practice 2) was to your school's improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.		Rank Order	Average Score*
School leaders identified a clear instructional focus and shared expectations for instructional best practices.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 4 Essential = 13	1	0.92
School leaders strategically used structures, practices, and resources (e.g., collaborative meeting time, coaching, supports for implementing the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks) to support data-driven instruction, research-based instructional strategies, and differentiation.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 4 Essential = 13	1	0.92
School staff used formal teaming and collaboration strategies, processes (e.g., instructional leadership team, collaborative planning, professional learning communities), and protocols to address individual students' academic needs.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 6 Essential = 11	3	0.88
School leaders consistently used student results on benchmark and common assessments and state assessments to make decisions regarding schoolwide practices.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 6 Essential = 11	3	0.88
Instructional leaders conducted frequent (weekly or daily) classroom observations focused on strengthening teachers' instructional practices and provided specific and actionable feedback on the quality and effectiveness of instruction to individual teachers and teacher teams.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 7 Essential = 10	5	0.86
Instructional leaders used data from classroom observations to inform instructional conversations and the provision of targeted and individualized supports (e.g., coaching) for teachers.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 7 Essential = 10	5	0.86
Teachers used and analyzed a variety of student-specific data, both individually and collaboratively, to assess the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and practices and modify instruction to meet students' needs.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 7 Essential = 10	5	0.86
School leaders developed instructional schedules in collaboration with teachers and ensured that instructional support staff were coordinated and aligned across grade levels and content areas.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 9 Essential = 8	8	0.82

*The average score ranges from 0 to 1, with an average score of 1 meaning all respondents chose "essential" and an average score of 0 meaning all respondents chose "of little" importance.

Exiting school leaders reported that frequently using a variety of ongoing assessments to identify students' academic needs and provide interventions was the most important practices in Turnaround Practice Area 3 related to their schools' improvement. Less than half reported that offering enrichment opportunities was very important or essential to their schools' improvement.

Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to student-specific supports (Turnaround Practice 3) was to your school's improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.		Rank Order	Average Score*
School staff used a variety of ongoing assessments (formative, benchmark, and summative) to frequently and continually assess instructional effectiveness and to identify students' individual academic needs to provide student-specific interventions and supports.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 8 Essential = 9	1	0.84
School leaders implemented research-based academic interventions, appropriate to student needs, systematically during regularly scheduled school time and for all core content areas through a robust tiered system of support.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 9 Essential = 8	2	0.82
School staff employed a system (structures, practices, and use of resources) for providing targeted instructional interventions and supports to all students, including the ongoing monitoring of the impact of tiered interventions.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 9 Essential = 8	2	0.82
Staff members were provided with training and support to ensure that they could (1) identify cues when students need additional assistance (both academic and nonacademic) and (2) respond appropriately to those cues.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 1 Very Important = 9 Essential = 7	4	0.78
All students with disabilities experienced research-based academic interventions appropriate for their specific needs.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 1 Very Important = 10 Essential = 6	5	0.76
All English language learners experienced research-based academic interventions appropriate for their specific needs.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 2 Very Important = 9 Essential = 6	6	0.75
Enrichment opportunities were made available to all students and implemented systematically during regularly scheduled school time.	Of little = 1 Somewhat = 8 Very Important = 6 Essential = 2	7	0.51

*The average score ranges from 0 to 1, with an average score of 1 meaning all respondents chose "essential" and an average score of 0 meaning all respondents chose "of little" importance.

Exited school leaders reported that establishing structures to deliver social-emotional supports and establishing and consistently enforcing clear behavior expectations were the most important practices in Turnaround Practice Area 4 related to their schools' improvement.

Please indicate how important each of the following specific strategies or initiatives related to school climate and culture (Turnaround Practice 4) was to your school's improvement, which led to exiting Level 4 status.		Rank Order	Average Score*
School leaders established structures to deliver social-emotional supports.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 1 Very Important = 6 Essential = 10	1	0.84
School staff clearly established and actively pursued a set of behavioral expectations and practices that supports students' learning and efforts to increase student achievement.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 0 Very Important = 8 Essential = 9	1	0.84
Well-defined and well-supported expanded learning opportunities (e.g., afterschool and during the summer) were made available to all students and specifically targeted to high-need students.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 2 Very Important = 8 Essential = 7	3	0.76
School staff made family and community engagement a priority and provided opportunities for families and the community to participate in school decision making and social activities.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 3 Very Important = 8 Essential = 6	4	0.73
School staff shared individual and mutual responsibility for building the capacity of families to support education through a systemic system of wraparound services (e.g., health, housing referrals) and assessed the needs of students and families throughout the school year.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 2 Very Important = 11 Essential = 4	5	0.71
School leaders established structures (e.g., structured advisories, mentor programs) to support relationships among students and adults.	Of little = 0 Somewhat = 6 Very Important = 4 Essential = 7	6	0.69

*The average score ranges from 0 to 1, with an average score of 1 meaning all respondents chose "essential" and an average score of 0 meaning all respondents chose "of little" importance.

Nearly all exited school leaders reported that none of their autonomies as a Level 4 school inhibited their improvement. The ability to control the professional development calendar and the school day schedule for staff and students were the most likely to be reported to contribute to their improvement. Many school leaders reported having less autonomy in all areas since exiting Level 4 and reported that their current level of autonomy has inhibited their school’s ability to sustain improvements.

How did the following factors related to autonomy affect your school’s ability to improve student performance and subsequently exit Level 4 status?		How, if at all, has your autonomy in each area changed since exiting Level 4?	How has your current level of autonomy in each area affected your school’s ability to sustain improvements?
Ability to control the professional development calendar for staff (e.g., to determine the number of professional development days per year, control of the professional development topic)	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 1 Contributed = 15	Less = 5 No change = 7 More = 1	Inhibited = 2 Neither = 2 Contributed = 8
Ability to control the school-day schedule for staff (e.g., individual and collaborative planning time)	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 1 Contributed = 15	Less = 6 No change = 6 More = 1	Inhibited = 3 Neither = 4 Contributed = 5
Ability to control the school-day schedule for students (e.g., instruction, start and end times)	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 2 Contributed = 14	Less = 6 No change = 7 More = 0	Inhibited = 4 Neither = 3 Contributed = 5
Ability to determine staffing roles and assignments	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 1 Contributed = 14	Less = 3 No change = 10 More = 0	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 7
Ability to recruit and hire highly qualified staff that meet school’s needs	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 1 Contributed = 14	Less = 2 No change = 11 More = 0	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
Ability to remove staff who do not meet performance standards or school needs	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 2 Contributed = 13	Less = 4 No change = 8 More = 1	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 4 Contributed = 7
Ability to establish budget priorities based on school needs	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 2 Contributed = 13	Less = 5 No change = 6 More = 2	Inhibited = 2 Neither = 3 Contributed = 7
Ability to control the school calendar for student learning (e.g., extended school year, vacation academies, expanded learning opportunities)	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 11	Less = 6 No change = 7 More = 0	Inhibited = 5 Neither = 3 Contributed = 4
Having additional time (e.g., extended day)	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 11		

Exited school leaders were most likely to report state systems of support and external partnerships contributed to their school’s ability to improve and exit Level 4 status.

How did the following factors related to external supports affect your school’s ability to improve student performance and subsequently exit Level 4 status?	How has each of the following other factors affected your school’s ability to sustain improvements since exiting Level 4 status?	
State systems of support for planning or implementing turnaround strategies	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 12	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 9
State systems of support for monitoring implementation of turnaround strategies	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 12	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
Having external partnerships focused on curriculum and instruction (in any content area)	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 12	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
Having external partnerships focused on students’ social-emotional needs, including mentoring	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 12	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
Having external partnerships focused on wraparound services, including health services	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 11	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 9
District leaders’ commitment to support turnaround efforts	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 3 Contributed = 11	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 9
Having external partnerships focused on parent and community engagement	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 10	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 7
District-level support for recruiting and hiring highly qualified staff in a timely fashion	Inhibited = 2 Neither = 4 Contributed = 9	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 2 Contributed = 9
District-level coaching, professional development, or content support	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 5 Contributed = 9	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 3 Contributed = 9
District systems of support for monitoring implementation of turnaround strategies	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 5 Contributed = 9	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
Communication between district-level staff and school staff	Inhibited = 2 Neither = 4 Contributed = 9	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 7
State-provided professional development or content support	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 6 Contributed = 9	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 5 Contributed = 7
District systems of support for planning or implementing turnaround strategies	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 6 Contributed = 8	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
District leaders’ capacity to support turnaround efforts	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 6 Contributed = 8	Inhibited = 0 Neither = 4 Contributed = 8
School board involvement	Inhibited = 2 Neither = 8 Contributed = 5	Inhibited = 1 Neither = 5 Contributed = 6

Exited school leaders were most likely to report engaging family and community members and implementing a tiered system of academic support as top challenges both when Level 4 and since exiting. Leaders were more likely to report classroom observations and two-way communication as a challenge since exiting Level 4.

Number of schools that ranked these in the Top 5 challenges to:	improving when Level 4	continued improvement since exiting Level 4
Engaging family and community members	7	6
Implementing a tiered system of supports for students in need of academic interventions and adjusting schoolwide academic supports	6	5
Effectively delivering social-emotional supports to students	5	3
Implementing processes and using data to address nonacademic student needs	4	2
Consistently implementing a schoolwide behavior plan	4	2
Consistently implementing and monitoring high expectations for all teachers	4	1
Providing adequate time for instruction	3	4
Providing opportunities for students to participate in expanded learning	3	1
Communicating and instilling a schoolwide vision for improvement	3	1
Using staffing autonomy to focus work on implementing turnaround plan or improving quality of teaching and learning	2	3
Using other autonomies (e.g., scheduling or budgetary) to focus work on implementing turnaround plan or improving quality of teaching and learning	2	3
Providing adequate time for teachers to collaborate and use data	2	3
Implementing a system for providing wraparound services to students	2	2
Effectively using classroom observation data to improve instruction	2	1
Implementing processes and using data to address academic student needs	2	1
Identifying nonacademic student needs	2	0
Providing training on how to identify student needs	2	0
Conducting classroom observations and communicating feedback to teachers	0	3
Creating effective systems to facilitate two-way communication between school leaders and teachers	0	2
Identifying academic student needs	0	1

ABOUT AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

Established in 1946, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., American Institutes for Research (AIR) is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance both domestically and internationally. As one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the world, AIR is committed to empowering communities and institutions with innovative solutions to the most critical challenges in education, health, workforce, and international development.

LOCATIONS

Domestic

Washington, D.C.
Atlanta, GA
Baltimore, MD
Chapel Hill, NC
Chicago, IL
Columbus, OH
Frederick, MD
Honolulu, HI
Indianapolis, IN
Naperville, IL
New York, NY
Sacramento, CA
San Mateo, CA
Silver Spring, MD
Waltham, MA

International

Egypt
Honduras
Ivory Coast
Kyrgyzstan
Liberia
Tajikistan
Zambia



AIR[®]

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH[®]

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-3835
202.403.5000 | TTY 877.334.3499

www.air.org

Making Research Relevant