Underperforming Schools Guidance: Local Stakeholder Grouplines

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

**Local Stakeholder Group - Overview of Functions**

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

The following is a synopsis of the law’s requirements for the local stakeholder group and suggestions for how a district might implement this requirement.

**Requirements for Convening a Local Stakeholder Group**

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

The group shall meet publicly and include:

1. ESE designee

2. School committee chair/designee

3. Union president/designee

4. Administrator from the school (superintendent choice)

5. Teacher from the school (faculty choice)

6. Parent from the school (parent association)

7. Social service, health and child welfare agencies representatives (superintendent choice)

8. As appropriate, representatives of workforce development agencies (superintendent choice)

9. EEC rep or DHE rep (EEC commissioner or secretary or secretary of education choice)

10. Community member (chief executive of town choice)

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

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

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

2. Measurable annual goals: annual targets in 13 required areas including student achievement, attainment rates, college/career ready measures, and school culture.

3. Authorities necessary to promote rapid improvement: the law lists 16 authorities that can be outlined in the plan (e.g., changes to curriculum, budgets, staff compensation, collective bargaining, district and school policies, professional development, etc.)

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

**1. Convene weekly meetings focused on the Massachusetts Turnaround Practice Research and Resources**

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

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

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

Between meetings, members would be asked to share the emerging themes and data with their own constituents, looking to obtain additional information. The second half-day meeting would be focused on generating specific recommendations to provide to the Superintendent or to the School

Committee.

**Transitioning to and Organizing a School Redesign Team to Implement**

**Turnaround Plans**

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

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

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

**Team**

| **Local Stakeholder Group (LSG)** | **Redesign Team (RDT)** |
| --- | --- |
| **Origins**—State law | **Origins –** ESE recommendation |
| **Tenure –** Limited. Specified by state law as 45 days (see  timeline on page 2) *Districts and/or schools may opt to re- convene the local stakeholder group as an advisory group at various times throughout the three-year process.* If a school continues in underperforming status beyond their initial 3-year Turnaround Plan, the LSG must be consulted on an annual basis and part of the Turnaround Plan renewal process until the school exits underperforming status. | **Tenure –** Ongoing throughout the school’s status as  underperforming |
| **Membership**—Maximum of 13 members from prescribed  roles defined by law, | **Membership**—At Superintendent’s discretion; led  by principal |
| **Representing**—Constituency groups (ex., WIB, EEC, Higher  Ed), district and school representatives, parents | **Representing**—School; recommended to be  comprised of +/-50% school staff, with union site leaders present; district representative optional; led by Principal |
| **Work Commitment**—Finite meeting commitments:  Convening one or more times within 30 days of school’s designation as underperforming, and making recommendations to the Superintendent 45 days later | **Work Commitment**—Frequent meetings and  ongoing engagement to:  • build the redesign plan  • provide oversight of the plan’s implementation  • evaluate the plan’s efficacy  • revise plan and implementation as needed |
| **Purpose and Expectations**—  • Ensure Stakeholder Representation: Members of the local stakeholder group are expected to participate in a data-driven process that ensures that the expertise and perspectives of key school and community stakeholders inform the development of recommendations.  • Ensure Accountability and Urgency: The local stakeholder group is expected to ensure that the proposed recommendations reflect the urgency to make changes and receive the full support of the community.  • Ensure Broad Communication: Local stakeholder group members are expected to ensure that the perspective of their constituency is heard and that proposed recommendations are communicated back to their constituency. | **Purpose and Expectations—**  • Use knowledge of past barriers and root causes of problems to develop specific action steps for implementing strategies in the Turnaround Plan;  • Bring the priorities described in the Turnaround Plan “alive” by framing the priorities as part of coherent vision for the school, articulating where the school will be in three years as a result of turnaround efforts;  • Build on the state turnaround plan to create an actionable redesign plan that is fully understood and supported by staff and students throughout the school; and  • Guide implementation of the redesign plan and make adjustments as necessary. |
| **Use of Data**—Use of summative measures, focusing on why the school has been low-performing and how the school compares to other like-schools in the district and across the Commonwealth. Data may be used to illustrate the critical nature of the issues and the long-term impact on students’ lifelong opportunities | **Use of Data**—May involve a more fine-grained analysis of student performance, by grade, subjects and across teachers. Data may include observational, and perceptual data and contribute to deep causal analysis; commitment to communicate the results of the analysis to others and apply new insights to revisions of the plan and/or its implementation |
| **Level of Recommendations**—“Balcony-level” or policy related recommendations that leverage the flexibility afforded in the law; recommendations for changes that may not be feasible without the support of the Local Stakeholder Group. (LSG checklist on page 8 for details) | **Level of Recommendations**—Comprehensive, detailed recommendations on the refinement of strategies and action steps to address components of both the state Turnaround Plan *and* the federal  school turnaround grant (see pg 10 for more details) |

**Continued Engagement with the Local Stakeholder Group**

**Annual report to School Committee:** Section 1J in the [Achievement Gap Act](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1j) outlines the responsibilities of superintendents with underperforming schools to conduct an annual review and communicate the school’s progress to their local school committee and the ESE’s Commissioner. The language in the statute reads:

*(k) Each school designated by the commissioner as underperforming under subsection (a) shall be reviewed by the superintendent, in consultation with the principal of the school, at least annually. The purpose of the review shall be to determine whether the school has met the annual goals in its turnaround plan and to assess the overall implementation of the turnaround plan. The review shall be in writing and shall be submitted to the commissioner and the relevant school committee not later than July 1 for the preceding school year. The review shall be submitted in a format determined by the department of elementary and secondary education.* (emphasis added)

The report can be in a format of your choosing, but should include the following information:

* + Name of district and name of underperforming school
  + Date of submission to the local school committee
  + Summary of the school’s progress toward the measurable annual goals outlined in the turnaround plan
  + Summary assessment of the overall implementation of the school’s turnaround plan

**State Requirements for Renewing Turnaround Plans for Underperforming Schools:** Each year, in the spring, underperforming schools should assess as a redesign team of what has worked, what has not, based on what evidence. Then, the school should revise the plan accordingly and set new benchmarks and MAGs for the following year.

If a school continues in underperforming status after the original three-year turnaround plan has expired and are directed by the Commissioner to renew their plan for one more year, districts are required to seek input from the Local Stakeholder Group on the revised, renewed plan.

**Sample Stakeholder Engagement Worksheet: Underperforming Schools**

Notes:

* All schools engaging in turnaround could benefit from considering these areas with stakeholders, but only underperforming schools under [M.G.L. Ch 69, Section 1J](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J) are advised to consider each.
* In addition to the worksheet provided here, attach the dated and signed final recommendations of the stakeholder group.

**District:**

**School:**

**Date:**

|  | **Recommendation Made?** | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Key Areas of Turnaround Plan** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **6 State Requirements:**   1. Address achievement gaps (ELL, students with disabilities, low-income) 2. Alternative ELL programs (“not withstanding chapter 71A”) 3. Financial plan for the school 4. Address social service and health needs (“ready to learn”) 5. Improve or expand child welfare services and law enforcement (“safe and secure learning environment”) 6. Improve workforce development services (“meaningful employment skills and opportunities”) |  |  |
| **Measurable annual goals that address:**   * 1. MCAS   2. Progress in areas of academic underperformance   3. Progress among subgroups   4. Reduction of achievement gaps   5. Student promotion, graduation, and dropout rates   6. Student attendance, dismissal, and exclusion rates   7. College readiness   8. Developmentally appropriate child assessments (preK-3)   9. Acquisition of 21st Century Skills   10. Student safety and discipline   11. Parent and family engagement   12. Building a culture of academic success among students   13. Building a culture of student support among school faculty and staff |  |  |
| **Authorities necessary to promote rapid movement**  (1) Expand, alter, or replace the curriculum  (2) Reallocate existing budget  (3) Provide additional district funds (up to per-pupil)  (4) Differentiate compensation of school staff (bargained with union)  (5) Expand school day and/or year  (6) Add pre-K and full-day kindergarten  (7)Require all staff to re-apply for employment  (8)Limit, suspend, or change collective bargaining agreements (as long as  reduced pay is commensurate with reduced hours)  (9) Limit, suspend or change 1 or more school district policy or practice related to the school  (10) Include job-embedded professional development with teacher input and feedback  (11) Increase teacher planning time and collaboration focused on improving student instruction  (12) Plan professional development for administrators that includes leadership skills and distributed leadership  (13) Provide for a continuum of high-expertise teachers by aligning hiring, induction, evaluation, professional development, advancement, culture, and organizational structure  (14) Search for and study best practices  (15) Address mobility and transiency  (16) Add components based on reasons for underperformance and  recommendations of stakeholder group |  |  |

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