

CST School Board Training Summary

Building Board Capacity to Oversee Improvement and Turnaround Processes

Center on School Turnaround at WestEd

www.centeronschoolturnaround.org

About the CST School Board Training

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) works to turn around schools and districts by building capacity across the education system. This training is designed to support local school board members as they learn about what turnaround is and how they can support turnaround efforts in their district. This toolkit includes case studies of two school boards that played particularly strong roles in their Local Education Agencies' (LEAs) efforts to dramatically improve student performance. The case studies are supported by guiding discussion questions and brief self-assessments. Also included with the toolkit is a synthesis of CST's *Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement*, especially for school boards.

The objectives for school boards using the CST School Board Training are to:

Phase I

1. Assess the school board's areas of strength, inconsistency, and opportunity relative to its oversight of district improvement, school improvement, and turnaround.
2. Learn from the experience of other school boards by reading and discussing a report about school boards and two case studies.
3. Understand the CST's *Four Domains for Rapid Improvement* and how this framework might provide a conceptual structure for district and school improvement processes.
4. Itemize possible "next steps" the board may take in response to the information and understandings acquired through the training.

Phase II

5. Option: Develop an action plan for strengthening the school board's effectiveness in: (a) setting policies related to continuous district improvement, school improvement, and turnaround; (b) overseeing the implementation of these policies. Implement the action plan and monitor the progress for several months.

The CST School Board Training process may be administered by the school board itself or with the assistance of an external facilitator. This toolkit provides the facilitator with all of the resources he/she may need to manage the training program. Facilitators can contact boards@adi.org with specific questions.



Introduction

All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) continuously manage two central processes: (1) the process by which the LEA itself improves; and (2) the way the LEA directs and supports the improvement of each of its schools. Many LEAs tackle a third task: facilitating turnaround in their lowest performing schools. Local school boards carry a huge responsibility in setting the policies that underlie LEA and school improvement processes and the LEA's management of school turnaround.

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) created this training to help a local school board build its own capacity to set effective policy on improvement and turnaround processes. The toolkit is designed to take a limited amount of time from each monthly board meeting over the course of six months. Elements of the training and toolkit may be used by new board members, who take office after the six-month initial focused training is completed.

The CST School Board Training guides board members through a series of readings and activities. Boards may speed up or slow down the proposed timeline based on their members' needs. For example, if the board is able to meet for large blocks of time, activities for multiple months may be combined. The timeline proposed here is based on the assumption that the school board must schedule this project within its regular, monthly business meetings at which much other work must be done. This timeline limits the time required during board meetings by asking school board members to read case studies and complete self-assessments individually, outside the board meetings.

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the purpose of this training?

This training is designed to build the capacity of local school board members to form policies and oversee processes for district improvement, school improvement, and school turnaround.

What do the training and toolkit include?

This training and toolkit include two background readings, case studies of two school boards that played particularly strong roles in their LEAs' efforts to dramatically improve student performance, a self-assessment for board members, discussion questions to lead conversations among board members, and, optionally, several worksheets/templates to guide future actions.



Who should use this training?

This training is specifically designed for school boards of LEAs that have one or more schools in need of substantial improvement or turnaround, but any local school board could benefit from the readings, discussions, and action planning steps.

Who leads the process?

Each school board nominates one person to act as facilitator. The facilitator could be the board chair, the superintendent, an external consultant, a representation from the state association of school boards, or someone from the state education agency (SEA). The facilitator coordinates the members to take the self-assessment, retrieves the self-assessment report from the CST website, facilitates the discussions during board meetings, and submits a copy of the action planning worksheet to CST.

What are the responsibilities of the facilitator?

Primary responsibilities of the facilitator include:

- Contact CST to initiate the training program.
- Be present at all board meetings that include components of this training.
- Register in the online system and add each board member's contact information.
- Send self-assessment to the board members.
- Distribute the readings to board members.
- Facilitate discussions with the board members about each reading.
- Facilitate a discussion about the local board, using the self-assessment report as a foundation for discussion.
- Work with the board to complete the Summary and Next Steps Worksheet.
- Submit the Summary and Next Steps Worksheet.
- Coordinate the administration of the second self-assessment (one year after the first assessment is administered).

How much time does the project take?

Phase I of the project is designed to occur over a six-month period and Phase II includes monitoring of progress at board meetings thereafter. As designed, the project includes activities conducted by board members outside their meetings (a 30 minute self-assessment, three 30–45 minute reading assignments, one 20 minute reading assignment, and a 10 minute Phase I Exit Survey) and 20–30 minutes of discussion during each board meeting. If larger blocks of time are available to the board, the activities may be completed in a shorter span of time. If Phase II is completed, second self-assessment is completed at the 12-month mark to monitor progress.

Who sees the results of the self-assessment?

The results of the self-assessment are anonymous and specific answers will not be attributed to individuals. The questionnaires are completed via a link from the CST website. The CST website tool aggregates the results of each board member's assessment and makes



a report available to the facilitator when the agenda calls for discussion. The facilitator then shares the report with the rest of the board and leads a discussion about the report. The State Partners also have access to the aggregated surveys and Phase II work plans.

Nationally, the results of the self-assessments may be gathered for research purposes. But, the results will be anonymous and not attributed to any individual or specific district.

How can boards discuss their own functionality with open meeting laws?

Local boards are often apprehensive about discussing their own functionality and effectiveness due to open meeting laws and the need for public transparency, and such topics are not cause for going into executive session. By reading and discussing case studies of other school districts, board members will be able to speak about similar issues that they may or may not experience in a neutral manner. After discussing other districts for several months, it may be easier to identify areas of strength and weakness for the board.

What are the outcomes of the training?

At the end of the training, the board should have a better understanding of how to: (1) manage the continuous improvement of the school district; (2) better support schools in their continuous improvement; and (3) better direct and support schools undergoing significant improvement or turnaround efforts. Board members will also have developed a background of specific strategies used by effective boards. In addition, the board may choose to create an action plan to work on identified opportunity areas. This optional action plan is implemented and progress monitored by the board after the initial project is complete.

How do facilitators access the online Project Facilitator site?

The facilitators may access the CST board training Project Facilitator site via [CSTs website](#).

Instructions on how to navigate the site are found included in the various activities in the toolkit. Detailed instructions, with screen shots, are available on the [CST website](#).

Board members do not require access to the Project Facilitator site but may access the readings via [CST's website](#).

Getting Started

To begin the CST School Board Training, the facilitator should send an email to boards@adi.org with the following information:

- Facilitator name
- Facilitator role (for example, superintendent, board chair, consultant, or representative of state school board association)
- Facilitator email
- Facilitator phone number
- LEA name



- LEA address
- Number of LEA board members, and
- Anticipated timeline to start the training

CST will then provide the facilitator a password to log into the CST board training Project Facilitator site via email.

Detailed instructions, with screen shots, on how to use the Project Facilitator site will be available on the [CST website](#).

Proposed Timeline for CST School Board Project

Activity	When?	What?	How Much Time?	Which Toolkit Resources?
Phase I: Building Board Capacity for Improvement and Turnaround				
Activity 1	Month 0	Introduction & Overview	15 minutes at board meeting	FAQs (pgs. 5–7)
Activity 2	Month 1	Board Self-Assessment (1)	30 minutes for each board member, outside of board meetings	Online self-assessment (pg. 7)
Activity 3	Month 2	Reading 1: <i>Killer B's</i>	45 minutes outside of board meeting	<i>Moving Beyond the Killer B's</i> (pg. 8 and link on CST's website)
Activity 4		Idea Exchange A: Discuss <i>Killer B's</i>	20–30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 8) Discussion question notes (pg. 18)
Activity 5	Month 3	Reading 2: Wichita Case Study	30 minutes outside of board meeting	Wichita Case Study (link on CST's website)
Activity 6		Idea Exchange B: Discuss Wichita Case Study	20–30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 9) Discussion question notes (pg. 19)
Activity 7	Month 4	Reading 3: New Haven Case Study	30 minutes outside of board meeting	New Haven Case Study (link on CST's website)
Activity 8		Idea Exchange C: Discuss New Haven Case Study	20–30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 10) Discussion question notes (pgs. 20-21)
Activity 9	Month 5	Read Four Domains for Boards Document	20-30 minutes outside of board meeting	Four Domains for School Boards (link on CST's website)



Activity 10		Idea Exchange D: Discuss Wow and Wonder from Four Domains for Board document	20-30 minutes at board meeting	Four Domains for School Boards (link on CST's website)
Activity 11	Month 6	Review Self-Assessment Report	30 minutes outside of board meeting	Self-Assessment Report generated from CST
Activity 12		12.a Idea Exchange E: Discuss aggregated report compiled from individual self-assessments and 12.b complete Phase I Exit Survey	20 minutes at board meeting for discussion, 10 minutes for post-training survey	Self-Assessment Report generated from CST Phase I Exit Survey (online via email)
Phase II: Action Plan to Initiate Change in Board Policy or Procedure (Optional)				
Activity 13	Month 7	Action Planning	30 minutes at board meeting	Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet (pgs. 14-16)
Activity 14	Ongoing	Progress Monitor Action Plans	10-15 minutes at board meeting	Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet (pgs. 14-16)
Activity 15	Month 12	Board Self-Assessment (2)	30 minutes for each board member, outside of board meetings	Online self-assessment
Activity 16		Idea Exchange F: Discuss aggregated Self-Assessment Report and compare to first assessment Facilitator Survey	30 minutes at board meeting 15 minutes of facilitator's time	Guiding questions (pg. 17); Comparison Report (generated from CST website) Instructions (pg. 17)
Activity 17	Thereafter	Complete a new Action Planning worksheet (optional)	As needed	Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet (pgs. 14-16)

Toolkit

School board facilitators receive a toolkit and access to an online Project Facilitator website which assists them as they guide a school board through the training program. The contents of the toolkit are listed below.

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