RESOURCE ALLOCATION STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE FOUR DOMAINS FOR RAPID SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd (CST) is one of seven national Content Centers in a federal network of 22 Comprehensive Centers. The U.S. Department of Education charges the centers with building the capacity of state education agencies (SEAs) to assist districts and schools in meeting student achievement goals. The goal of the CST is to provide technical assistance and to identify, synthesize, and disseminate research-based practices and emerging promising practices that will lead to the increased capacity of SEAs to support districts in turning around their lowest performing schools. The CST is a partnership of WestEd and the Academic Development Institute, the Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education at the University of Virginia, and the National Implementation Research Network.

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A National Focus on Improvement

In 2017, the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd published the *Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework* (*Four Domains*),[1] a framework to assist states, districts, and schools to improve student achievement in the lowest performing schools. The framework immediately garnered national attention by outlining four areas of focus — Turnaround Leadership, Instructional Transformation, Talent Development, and Culture Shift — that research and experience suggest are central to rapid school improvement. These practices complement a growing national focus on improvement for the lowest performing schools and greater support for persistently underperforming student groups.

Despite national attention on the need for school turnaround, many school districts across the United States are struggling to fund even the basic costs of school district operations, despite increases in funding. The fact is, revenues are not keeping pace with expenditures in many school districts across the country. As a result, the fiscal circumstances in local school districts and state education systems are increasingly challenging as costs for pensions, special education, employee healthcare, and other cost pressures continue to rise. Yet, the need to support vulnerable student populations and struggling schools remains high.

This paper outlines strategies for how school districts can maximize the use of existing resources to support the practices outlined in the *Four Domains.* Accordingly, the paper is intended to support state, district, and school leaders to rethink existing resource allocation strategies and focus on the most effective distribution of resources across the four domains.[2]

Resource Allocation Principles to Support the Four Domains

In addition to the resource allocation strategies that will be outlined in this paper for each of the four domains, we suggest four key principles — which can be applied across all of the strategies — for using resources to support school transformation. Figure 1 displays the four principles graphically, with each principle represented in a colored wedge. Throughout the paper, this graphic appears alongside different strategies that are being described, with the colored wedges indicating which principle(s) each strategy is utilizing.

Figure 1. Four principles of effective resource allocation

Equitably distribute resources

Consider resources beyond just funding

Blend, braid, and layer resources

Establish priorities through stakeholder engagement

Source: Developed by CST, 2019.

The four principles of effective resource allocation outlined in this paper are the following:

Resources must be distributed equitably to support school turnaround.

Additional resources should be distributed to students with the greatest needs. When thinking about equitable distribution of resources, it is important to understand that equitable does not mean equal. Research suggests that educating disadvantaged students, such as those from a low-income background or those who are limited English proficient, may cost twice as much as educating students from more affluent backgrounds.[3] To distribute resources equitably, leaders must collect and analyze school-level data beyond per-pupil funding — such as

teacher experience levels, teacher turnover rates, as well as student data on demographics, poverty rates, and achievement levels. Using these data, leaders can identify inequities in current resource distribution as well as student achievement gaps. Once these gaps have been identified, leaders can determine how to intentionally allocate staff and other necessary resources either by school-level needs or based on specific performance gaps (e.g., for specific student groups) to support school turnaround priorities. For example, in the Talent Development domain, we discuss the importance of tracking and monitoring the distribution of highly qualified teachers to ensure equity across school sites. Similarly, in the Culture Shift domain, we explore how to create a culture of collaborative decision-making around resource allocation that supports the equitable distribution of resources as a central priority.

Resources should be defined to include more than just funding.

Resources include a range of elements beyond just funding, such as staff talent and expertise, staff time, student learning time, and outside services offered by community partners. Effective resource allocation strategies should consider the quality and variety of existing investments in people and programs — not just the per-pupil quantity of investments — and align those resources with turnaround priorities.[4] For example, beyond thinking solely about funding, in the Talent Development domain we discuss resource strategies for considering how to most effectively use teachers' non-instructional time to build their capacity (e.g., through collaborative lesson planning, instructional coaching, and time for data analysis and reflection). Similarly, in the Instructional Transformation domain, we discuss how to maximize the resource of student learning time.

Resource priorities should be established through meaningful stakeholder input, and should be tied to goals for improving student performance.

Regular reviews of resource allocation data should be conducted to determine the greatest areas of impact and where to make adjustments. When planning school turnaround efforts, planning teams should be developed with diverse representation of district leaders, including members from fiscal services, and with community input. Stakeholder engagement is an important opportunity to gather feedback and perspectives from multiple stakeholders — parents, students, community-based partners, and local businesses, for example — about what is working and what is not. Input from these stakeholders provides data beyond test scores to help identify some of the more nuanced challenges and causes of poor school performance. Stakeholder engagement should also include collaboration with union groups, who, if meaningfully included in resource-allocation decisions, can also help garner critical educator support for implementing improvement efforts. In the Culture Shift and Turnaround Leadership domains, we explore how to build this culture of collaboration around goal-setting and resource allocation decision-making.

To maximize available resources, the practices of blending, braiding, and/or layering funding sources should be utilized when possible.

Rather than thinking about resource allocation as a series of disconnected, individual investments, state and district leaders should consider how resources can interact and strengthen one another to support turnaround efforts. For decades, a lack of flexibility in resource allocation prevented states and local education agencies (LEAs) from optimizing efficient and effective spending practices. With the authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as recent transitions in state allocation policies, many states and LEAs now have greater flexibility in how to utilize once prescriptive and restricted funds. To optimize the use of available funds, states and LEAs can blend, braid, or layer resources to consolidate, coordinate, or combine funding streams, even when funds have specific requirements

or restrictions. Blending, braiding, and layering funding sources offers districts a valuable opportunity to maximize existing funding to support a broader and more coherent set of school turnaround strategies across each domain. When districts elect to consolidate, or blend, their federal funds, all sources of federal funding can be combined to fund an education program. Braiding funds frequently requires districts to specify who is being served by each funding source (see Figure 2 for more about blending and braiding). The practice of layering funds can be used when a specific funding source is inadequate to support the entire cost of a program or initiative, so an additional funding source is "layered" on top of it (see Figure 3). These distinct, yet related, approaches to resource allocation can be alternatively applied depending on the types of restrictions placed on various funding sources.

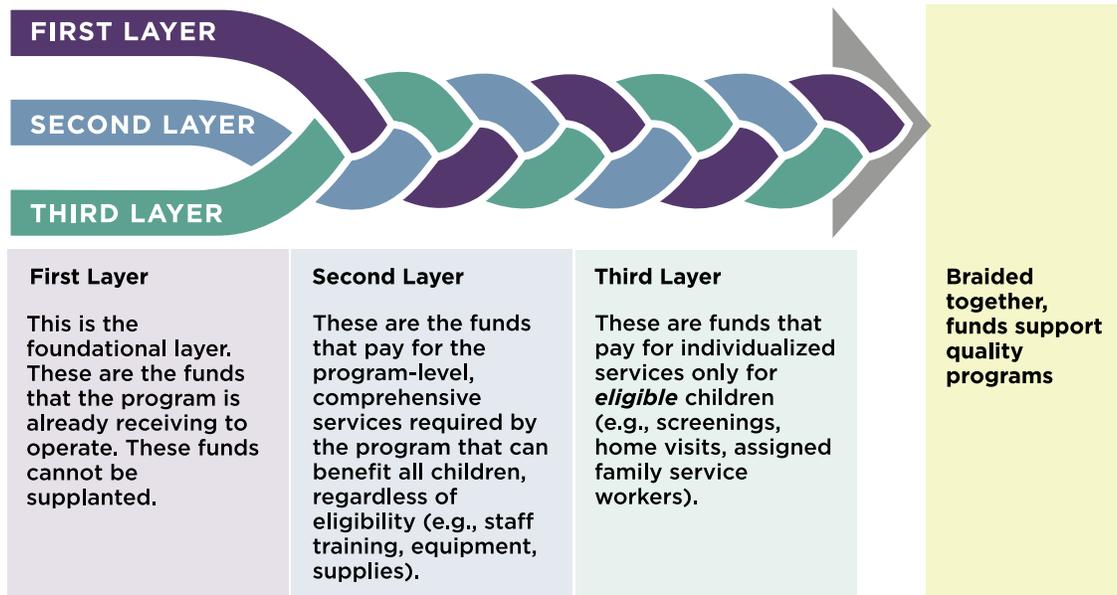## Figure 2. Overview of blending and braiding

Practice	Description	Example
Blending	Funds from two or more separate funding sources are combined to pay for a unified set of program services to eligible groups of students.[a] Blending funds provides an opportunity to maximize resources by incorporating activities supported by various funding sources into a single program, which operates to simultaneously meet the needs of multiple student groups.	For example, a district might blend state and local funds with federal funds to support professional development opportunities to recruit, develop, retain, and sustain talent, a strategy outlined in the *Four Domains.* Taking this a step further, a district might blend state and local funds with federal and special education funds to support instructional transformation strategies that focus on supporting teachers to properly diagnose and respond to student learning needs.
Braiding	Funds from two or more funding sources are coordinated to support the total cost of services, but revenues are allocated and expenditures tracked by each particular funding source. Expenditures are tracked to ensure that each funding source is charged its fair share of program and administrative costs.[a, b]	For example, when using federal funds for a districtwide Multi-Tiered System of Supports program, if 10 percent of the students served are eligible for special education, and 15 percent are English learner students, then the district might use IDEA funds for 10 percent of the program cost and Title III funds for 15 percent of the cost.[c]

a. Wallen, M., & Hubbard, A. (2013). *Blending and braiding early childhood funding streams toolkit: Enhancing financing for high-quality early learning programs.* The Ounce of Prevention Fund. Retrieved from https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NPT-Blended-Funding-Toolkit.pdf

b. Tennessee Department of Education. (2015). *Coordinated spending guide, braiding and blending funds.* Nashville, TN: Office of Consolidated Planning & Monitoring, Tennessee Department of Education. Retrieved from https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3113439/TN-Coordinated-Spending-Braiding-Blending-Guide.pdf

c. Schreier, D., & Kniseley, C. (2016). *Leveraging IDEA Funds* (PowerPoint Presentation). IDEA Fiscal Forum. Retrieved from https://cifr.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BlendingAndBraidingFundsIFF2016.pdf

Figure 3. Overview of layered funding

FIRST LAYER

SECOND LAYER

THIRD LAYER

First Layer	**Second Layer**	**Third Layer**	**Braided together, funds support quality programs**
This is the foundational layer. These are the funds that the program is already receiving to operate. These funds cannot be supplanted.	These are the funds that pay for the program-level, comprehensive services required by the program that can benefit all children, regardless of eligibility (e.g., staff training, equipment, supplies).	These are funds that pay for individualized services only for *eligible* children (e.g., screenings, home visits, assigned family service workers).	

Source: NC Early Childhood Foundation. (2014). *Layered funding: Hallmark of EHS – Child Care Partnerships*. Retrieved from http://buildthefoundation.org/2014/03/layered-funding-hallmark-of-ehs-child-care-partnerships/

While many LEAs are benefiting from increased flexibility in resource allocation policies, there are still many provisions to which LEAs must adhere. To effectively implement blending, braiding, or layering practices, LEAs and state-level improvement leaders must first develop a comprehensive understanding of the various funding resources and their allowable uses, then align those resources to address identified needs for improving student performance. State resource guides on the allowable use of different funding sources can support districts to maximize existing resources to support school turnaround. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education's *Coordinated Spending Guide*[5] provides a matrix of allowable expenditures using federal funds to support various improvement initiatives. The Ounce of Prevention Fund provides specific examples of how blending or braiding practices support early childhood education.[6] Meanwhile, the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation offers best practices on layering funds to support their preschool and early childhood programs.[7] In each of these cases, resource allocation decisions are grounded in an assessment of student needs, as described in the Turnaround Leadership domain. From there, leaders can determine which evidence-based strategies to apply to address student needs, and then which funds can appropriately be used to support those strategies. Blending, braiding, or layering funds are key levers for implementing the range of resource allocation strategies supporting the four domains, as we discuss in the sections that follow.

Adopting a Continuous Improvement Approach

As noted in the *Four Domains* framework, turnaround leaders have the responsibility to "guide and monitor turnaround initiatives; they accept responsibility for results." To sustain and maximize the effectiveness of school turnaround efforts once they have been launched, leaders should adopt a systemwide continuous improvement approach. Continuous improvement is the practice of continually studying and improving system processes — and in the case of resource allocation, investments in education programs — to make them as efficient and effective as possible. As such, reviews of data should occur not just when defining priorities, but in regular cycles.

Leaders can use a continuous improvement approach to measure how and why the practices implemented are working (or not), and how expenditures translate into academic growth for struggling students. To engage in regular reviews of data, leaders, including teachers "on the frontlines" in the classroom, need access to data to measure and understand how programs and services add value to turnaround efforts. Accordingly, for a continuous improvement approach to take hold, district leaders need to set up structures and processes for the collection, review, and use of data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Involving teachers in continuous improvement offers several benefits, including leveraging the resource of teachers' on-the-ground expertise and, as noted in the *Four Domains* framework, strengthening schoolwide staff commitment to turnaround efforts.

Resource Strategies to Support Turnaround Leadership

In this section, we discuss resource allocation strategies that support the practices described in the Turnaround Leadership domain. As described in the *Four Domains* framework, leadership must "develop and execute data-informed turnaround plans that are customized to local needs to guide and monitor turnaround initiatives" and "communicate the urgent need for turnaround." Accordingly, we first discuss resource strategies to support school and district leaders' development of data-driven improvement plans. Through structured cycles of data review, leaders can assess the effectiveness of adopted programs and, using a continuous improvement approach, make necessary adjustments to how resources are allocated to maximize effectiveness.

Next in this section, we discuss the important role of effective communication in Turnaround Leadership. Leaders are central to efforts to communicate about school turnaround, including communicating the rationale for grounding resource allocation decisions for school turnaround in the four principles outlined in the previous section — equitably distributing resources; considering resources beyond just funding in resource decisions; establishing resource priorities based on stakeholder input and aligned to student need; and blending, braiding, and layering funds to maximize available resources.

Finally, this section describes how leaders can use classroom observations and learning walks, by dedicating the resource of leaders' time, to support school turnaround.

Domain 1: Turnaround Leadership

Domain descriptor: Turnaround leaders at the state, local [district], and school levels drive initiatives to facilitate rapid, significant improvement for low-performing schools. Because the state education agency, districts, and schools function collectively as a system, leaders' initiatives at any one level of the system affect other levels. At all levels in the system, leaders make it a priority to elevate the performance of low-achieving schools, and they communicate the urgent need for turnaround so that all students receive the high-quality education they deserve. The policies, structures, resources, and personnel that leaders put in place to rapidly and significantly improve the schools reflect the leaders' strong commitment to this work. Turnaround leaders catalyze and organize the coordinated work of the staff charged with implementing efforts to rapidly improve schools, harnessing their efforts and drawing them to a shared vision of success. Leaders at all levels understand their role in ensuring turnaround; they develop and execute data-informed turnaround plans that are customized to local needs to guide and monitor turnaround initiatives; and they accept responsibility for results.

Developing the turnaround plan

The school turnaround process begins with identifying areas for improvement, determining specific strategies to address these areas, and communicating the urgency for these turnaround efforts. Although a range of stakeholders should be involved in the process, leaders drive the effort to develop a turnaround plan and can ensure a sustained focus and commitment to the plan. District and site leaders can begin by analyzing student outcome data with a purposeful gathering of diverse stakeholders. In addition, leaders must also perform a *comprehensive needs assessment*, as currently required by ESSA, on instructional practices and school climate and culture in order to identify gaps between student outcome data and the quality of support by school site. While the process of conducting a needs assessment requires resources — namely, the investment of time in collecting and reviewing data — it provides critical information for developing and communicating an effective improvement plan that aligns district and site-level priorities to support school turnaround.

Following the needs assessments, district leaders should examine all available resources to support the general education program. Once district leaders have defined the resources needed to support a strong general education program — a strategy known as *defining the base* — they can use student outcome data and finance data to determine how to align supplemental dollars in a targeted way to support school improvement efforts. Efforts to determine how to align resources above and beyond the general education program are a central component to the development of a robust school turnaround plan — by making a critical link between turnaround programs and initiatives, and how resources will be deployed to support these strategies.
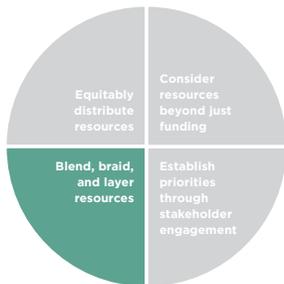
Once the general education program is defined, and programs to supplement the general education program to meet targeted student needs are determined, district leaders are better equipped to use blending, braiding, or layering models to maximize available resources. State and local funds that are less restrictive in nature can be appropriately aligned to programs and services that support all students. Other funds, designed specifically to fund programs and services to support the needs of underperforming students or students from low-income families, can be maximized by providing supplemental funding for programs and services to meet the unique needs of struggling students. For example, restricted funds can be aligned to support turnaround efforts associated with further development of instructional quality or to improvements in school climate and culture.

Communicating the importance of turnaround

Leaders across all levels of the system also play a critical role in communicating the importance of school turnaround efforts, the rationales behind specific approaches to turnaround included in the turnaround plan, and the associated resource allocation decisions. For example, leaders can communicate and frame the priorities, and the guiding principles of the budget, to both internal and external stakeholders. This requires leaders to know when

to focus on the more technical aspects of the budget and improvement plans and when to frame the budget in terms of the values it communicates. Accordingly, leaders can help stakeholders, including other leaders, to understand the importance of the four principles of effective resource allocation, and how the principles can help guide resource allocation decisions.

Communicating about and involving stakeholders in a review of needs-assessment data, turnaround plans, and resource allocation decisions is a critical strategy for leaders to "communicate the urgent need for turnaround," and garner support for improvement practices, one of the key leadership practices outlined in the *Four Domains* framework. Needs assessments serve to highlight areas of underperformance, achievement gaps, and gaps in support; thus, communicating about these data can serve as a powerful way to help stakeholders recognize the need for, and rationale behind, turnaround efforts.

Leading through learning

Many education experts agree that quality teaching is one of the central factors in improving academic outcomes for students.[8] Cultivating instructional expertise is perhaps the most important, yet often overlooked, resource practice to support school improvement. Most district and site leaders operate under assumptions that agreed-upon strategies to support turnaround efforts are implemented in the classroom, but they may not have evidence indicating that efforts are being implemented with fidelity — or implemented at all. To effectively lead change, identifying goals and objectives is not enough; to identify where improvement needs to happen, leaders must understand what is being implemented in practice.[9]
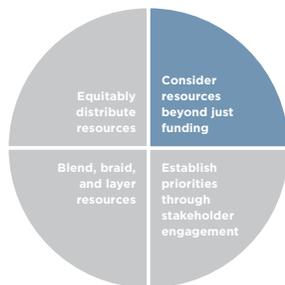
Classroom observations provide site leaders a window into implementation. This strategy is an example of using the resource of time — in this case, leadership's time — strategically to drive improvement. Site leaders can use classroom observations to promote the goals and objectives for school turnaround, identify personalized professional development to support teachers' classroom instruction, and transform feedback to support teachers to improve.[10] Including teachers in the development of observation tools and strategies invites them to engage in their own improvement and the success of the school. Identifying teachers whose strengths align to the goals and objectives for school turnaround, and partnering them with teachers in need of support, offers teachers a valuable opportunity to teach, learn, and improve with peers.

Resource Strategies to Support Talent Development

In this section, we examine resource allocation strategies that support the practices described in the Talent Development domain. This domain centers on recruiting, retaining, and developing high-quality staff, and notes that staffing should be approached with equity in mind, matching staff with a school's specific needs. This domain emphasizes that to develop high-quality staff, districts must prioritize professional learning and must ensure that professional learning efforts are effective. Central to this domain is the recognition that resources include not only funding, but also staff talent and time. Thus, it is critical that all three types of resources — funding, staff talent, and staff time — are allocated effectively. Additionally, by building strong partnerships with unions, districts can benefit from the expertise and experience of union members, who can serve as valuable resources both by publicly supporting turnaround efforts and by helping ensure that resource allocation strategies are aligned with the needs of staff.

Domain 2: Talent Development

Domain Descriptor: Turnaround requires competent and committed personnel at every level and in every position. Policies and procedures to identify, select, place, retain, and sustain these personnel, especially teachers and school-level leaders, are a precursor to school turnaround. Staffing of teachers and leaders for turnaround schools should be approached with equity in mind. Turnaround competencies are identified and used to select and develop turnaround teachers, model teachers, and leaders. At all levels, educators utilize and hone their instructional and transformational leadership to build capacity in those they supervise by continually balancing support with accountability.

Research underscores the importance of investing in teacher quality, with effective teachers shown to be the most important school-based factor impacting student achievement. National studies have found that measures of teacher preparation and certification, for example, are strongly correlated with student achievement in both reading and math, even after controlling for student poverty and language status. [11]

Allocating the resource of staff talent: Assign highly qualified staff equitably across schools

With approximately 80 percent of education expenditures spent on staff salaries and benefits nationwide,[12] it is particularly critical to consider not only the quantity of funds dedicated to staff, but also the effectiveness of how those staff are allocated across the district and within schools.

These considerations include ensuring that higher-need schools are provided with highly qualified, experienced teachers whose capabilities match the schools' needs. Studies consistently show that low-income and minority students have less access to such teachers,

despite the ESSA's specific requirement that states identify and address the inequitable distribution of highly qualified teachers.[13] Doing so requires the collection and analysis of school-level data, including teacher experience levels, teacher turnover rates, and student data including demographics, poverty rates, and achievement levels. Using these data, districts can determine how to allocate teacher talent for improving student outcomes. Several states, such as Massachusetts[14] and Ohio,[15] have produced guidance, tools, and policies for districts to collect and use school-level data in determining schools' needs and assigning teachers equitably. These resources may serve as a guide for other states.

Importantly, analyzing school-level data to determine staffing allocations can also be applied to the distribution of other staff resources like school counselors, nurses, librarians, and after-school staff. These staff can help improve school climate and culture and can provide Tier II and III supports (within the Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework) to meet individual student needs, and therefore help students and teachers focus on learning and teaching.
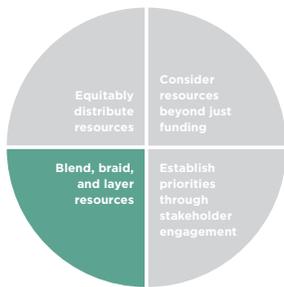
Several federal funding streams can be blended, braided, or layered for recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff at high-need schools. Title I Part A funds may be used for teachers who serve in low-performing Title I schools,[16] and Title II Part A funds may be used for a wide variety of recruitment and retention efforts, particularly in low-income schools. These can include expert assistance in candidate hiring, differential pay for school leaders in high-need areas, and advancement and professional growth initiatives for staff.[17]

Allocating the resource of teacher time: Expand teacher time for job-embedded professional learning

The Talent Development domain identifies professional learning as a key investment for turnaround schools. However, it can also be a challenging investment, as it requires not only funding for the professional learning content or provider — delivered through workshops, coaches, mentors, or other formats — but also the valuable resource of teacher, and other staff, time. Districts' current investment in professional learning is not insubstantial, so it is critical to ensure that this resource is used effectively. Districts nationwide spend $18 billion per year on professional development, and the typical teacher spends 89 hours each year on professional learning activities. However, teachers report that much of this content is not relevant or effective in improving their instruction.[18]

Teachers often report that lectures and workshops designed to support their professional growth are disconnected from their daily practice. Meanwhile, research suggests that professional learning is most likely to enhance teacher knowledge and skills when it is ongoing and grounded in day-to-day teaching practice, also known as "job-embedded" professional learning.[19] For teachers to participate in job-embedded professional learning, an adequate proportion of their contracted time needs to be dedicated to *non-instructional time*, as opposed to active instruction

time. Non-instructional time is necessary for ongoing professional learning activities such as collaboration, coaching, reflection, and planning. However, according to the 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, the average amount of time that teachers are contracted to spend on active instruction constitutes about 80 percent of their total contracted work week.[20] With lesson preparation, grading, and administrative tasks consuming most of the remainder, this leaves little time for professional learning.

Indeed, compared with teachers in other high-performing countries, teachers in the U.S. spend significantly more time engaged in active instruction and less time on reflection, planning, and collaboration.[21] Meanwhile, in a study of 17 high-performing or rapidly improving schools across the United States, an average of 40 percent of the teachers' work week was non-instructional time, used for collaborative lesson planning, professional development, student data analysis, coaching, and similar activities[22] — approximately twice the nationwide average proportion of teacher time spent on non-instructional activities. Thus, research suggests that on average across the country, the valuable resource of teacher time may be disproportionately allocated toward active instruction. Shifting this resource toward more non-instructional time may have a powerful impact on student outcomes.

In addition to shifting more of teachers' current contracted time toward professional learning activities, districts can use Title II Part A funds to expand teachers' non-instructional time.[23] Title II Part A funds may be used to support a wide variety of professional learning activities, including job-embedded practices that help districts leverage teachers' professional learning time as effectively as possible. For example, Title II Part A funds may be used for providing flexible time for collaborative planning, curriculum writing, peer observations, and leading trainings, and for hiring substitute teachers for class coverage during the school day while these activities take place.[24]

Leveraging labor unions as a resource by building a productive partnership

Unions can serve as high-leverage resources to district leaders in their effort to recruit, retain, and develop high-quality staff to support school turnaround. Union leaders and their members can contribute their expertise and experience to ensure that resource allocation decisions to support talent development are aligned with the needs of teachers.

Yet, at times labor unions' interests are seen as competing with those of the district, and collective bargaining can create delays or other challenges when district leaders are faced with resource allocation decisions. However, while unions and districts may not always agree on where to prioritize funds, they ultimately share the same goal of supporting teachers and other staff and improving outcomes for students. To establish a successful union–administrator partnership, key strategies for collaboration include engaging in open and frequent communication; approaching school improvement with a systems-focused approach; and focusing on substantive areas affecting the quality of teaching or student achievement. National- and state-level unions can serve as useful sources of technical assistance, training, and resources for establishing such partnerships.[25]

Through these collaborative partnerships, not only can districts avoid oppositional confrontations with unions, but they can leverage unions' perspectives, resources, and powerful voice to support school improvement efforts. In a series of case studies on collaborative partnerships between unions and administrators across the United States, administrators described the active contributions that unions played in driving school improvement forward. After district and union leaders collaboratively identified specific shared goals, union leaders helped districts develop innovative solutions for various school improvement priorities. For example, in at least two partnership cases, these school improvement solutions included developing new processes for student data analysis, school and teacher assessment, and professional development.[26] District leaders with collaborative union partnerships have also described how even when budgets forced them to cut staff costs, union leaders helped them craft creative solutions that achieved the necessary staff cost reductions in ways that felt least harmful to staff.[27]

Furthermore, once collaborative initiatives are developed to support talent development, unions can serve as valuable advocates for their widespread adoption. By publicly supporting school improvement initiatives and helping explain their rationale, union leaders can serve as a resource for communicating with staff and other stakeholders as well as garnering staff and public support. By collaborating around shared goals, problem solving, developing new strategies, and implementation, districts and unions can have a tangible positive impact on school turnaround efforts, including talent development. Indeed, an analysis of schools and districts with collaborative union partnerships found that after controlling for poverty and school type, the quality of formal partnerships between union leaders, administrators, and school staff were a significant predictor of student performance, as well as performance improvement.[28]

Resource Strategies to Support Instructional Transformation

In this section, we discuss resource alloca-tion strategies that support the Instructional Transformation domain. This domain empha-sizes that instruction should be differen-tiated based on students' needs, and that it should be grounded in evidence-based practices and aligned with state standards. Personalizing instruction requires the optimi-zation of two key resources: student learning time, along with teachers' non-instructional time, which can be used for student data analysis and planning. Furthermore, the Instructional Transformation domain pro-motes a whole-child approach to learning, including identifying all assets and barriers to student learning — both school-based and out-of-school factors — and working to leverage those assets and remove those barriers wherever possible. Community organizations that provide support services (e.g., healthcare, nutrition, youth develop-ment programming) may serve as valuable partners in this effort. Moreover, partner-ships with community organizations present the opportunity to blend funding from outside agencies with school district funds, a key resource allocation strategy.

Domain 3: Instructional Transformation

Domain descriptor: Improvement in student learning outcomes depends on systemwide support for change in classroom instruction. Effective instructional practice — including strong standards-based instruction, data-based planning, differentiation and individualization, research-based pedagogical approaches, and classroom management — must be identified and supported at the school, district, and broader system level. Schools cultivate an environment of both high expectations and support for students' academic accomplishment. While districts and schools strive to focus their organization's attention on the in-school factors impacting student performance, they also attempt to address factors that are traditionally non-school-based so that every student comes to the task of learning ready for the challenge.

Allocating the resource of teacher time: Analyze student data to inform instruction

Equitably distribute resources / Consider resources beyond just funding / Blend, braid, and layer resources / Establish priorities through stakeholder engagement

To develop effective, individualized instruction, schools must optimize the use of non-instructional planning time for teachers, as well as student learning time — both of which are limited resources. As one critical use for non-instructional time, this domain notes that student-centered instruction requires teachers to use student data to identify individual student needs and design their instruction to respond to those needs. This closely aligns with the instructional best practice

of *formative assessment*, which involves continual examination of how student learning is developing, with real-time data collected in the classroom, so that the teacher can make ongoing adjustments to instructional practice.[29] With the teacher examining the progress and needs of individual students' learning, formative assessment supports individualized instruction.[30]

As described earlier, expanding teachers' non-instructional time may be possible by reallocating some active instruction time, or by using various funding streams to provide additional time. Some funds specifically support the use of student data to drive instruction. For example, Title I schools may use federal Title I Part A funds for extending time for teachers to review at-risk students' data.[31] These funds may also be used for equipment, materials, and training needed to compile and analyze student achievement data.[32] At the state level, nearly every state has committed funds to building student data systems and increasing teachers' data literacy, though funding for expanding teacher time to use student data remains a barrier.[33]

Expanding and enhancing the resource of student learning time

One potential strategy to improve student outcomes, outlined in the Instructional Transformation domain, is to expand student learning time. Afterschool and summer programs, for example, can add up to 115 days of learning time beyond the school day and year. Grounded in youth development practices and often delivered by community partners, these programs offer students the opportunity to expand on learning from the school day. Managed well, these additional hours can include project-based learning, community service, and internships that give practical application to school day lessons and broaden students' horizons.

They also support mastery of academic content directly through tutoring and indirectly through enrichment — such as theater, science, creative writing, or debate — that embed academic content into engaging activities. With a focus on creativity and collaboration, afterschool participants can develop and practice important social and emotional skills — for example, self-management, interpersonal skills, social awareness, and a growth mindset — that are essential to academic and personal success. Furthermore, the additional time spent with afterschool educators provides students with greater opportunities to build relationships with supportive adults in the school community. Research shows that relationships between students and school staff are closely linked with concrete gains in school day attendance, graduation rates, and academic performance.[34]
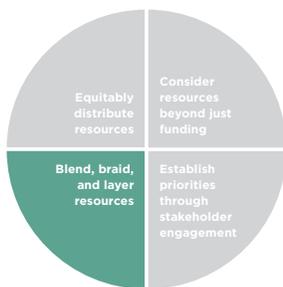
One way to expand student learning time — without compromising teachers' non-instructional time — is to direct additional funds toward this strategy. Federal funds to support expanded learning time include Title I Part A; Title VI, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants; and School Improvement Grants. Several states and localities have also passed legislation to fund expanded learning time.[35]

Through the use of innovative scheduling and creative use of class time, some schools have also managed to expand teacher planning time and student learning time without substantial additional costs. For example, the Center for American Progress published a case study of several schools that aimed to

use innovative scheduling to expand teacher development and planning time — without reducing student learning time — and provide additional opportunities for students to benefit from personalized interventions and enhanced educational experiences.[36] In all but one case, these schools managed to do so with little or no additional cost. These schools' strategies included: bringing in community partners to teach enrichment activities; rotating students through small-group learning, large-group instruction, independent learning, and immersive experiences; integrating self-paced, digital learning into part of the students' day; and organizing teachers into teams and staggering their vacation breaks throughout the year. Each of these strategies freed up some portion of teachers' time during the school day, while often expanding students' opportunities for differentiated support, and resulted in improved student performance.

Leveraging community partnerships to offer additional services

Out-of-school factors such as hunger, inadequate mental or dental care, and home-based stressors can play a significant role in hindering students' performance and contribute to achievement gaps.[37] Consequently, the Instructional Transformation domain encourages identifying such obstacles to student success and working to remove these barriers, including by establishing community partnerships. By leveraging resources from outside the district, schools can provide a much greater wealth of services to students — and make a significant impact on student outcomes — with the majority of funding and time contributed by external sources.

Schools that have organized and embraced local partners and that work together with these partners to share resources and build an integrated, site-based set of supports for students, are sometimes known as *Community Schools.* Community Schools' supports often focus not only on academics, but also on health, social services, and civic engagement. For example, they might provide counseling, medical care, dental services, afterschool programs, and transportation assistance. Research demonstrates that Community Schools can have a positive impact on student outcomes, including attendance, academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and reduced racial and economic achievement gaps.[38]

While providing such wide-spanning services may seem daunting, schools and districts need only contribute a fraction of the total cost. A survey by the Coalition for Community Schools found that for every one dollar spent by districts on Community School activities, three dollars were spent by other partners.[39] On average, 26 percent of funding for Community School activities came from district funds, with 20 percent coming from federal funds, 14 percent from state funds, 15 percent from city and county funds, 13 percent from private foundations, and the remaining 12 percent from businesses, community-based organizations, and donations. While establishing relationships with community partners requires an investment of time and resources — including ongoing time and resource implications because the services have to be coordinated — creating a diverse network of partners provides a number of long-term benefits. Along with providing the funding and skilled personnel necessary for this wider range of services, community partners can provide schools with operational support, strategic planning expertise, greater financial stability through a diversified portfolio of funding sources, and a more connected environment in which students and families feel they have multiple sources of adult support.[40]
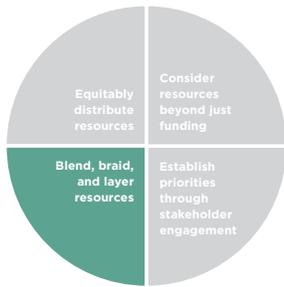
In addition to the funds that can be leveraged by partnering with outside agencies, a range of federal funds can support Community School activities. As discussed earlier, Title I Part A funds may be used to support expanded learning time, including that of Community School activities. Additionally, in some circumstances, Title I Part A funds may be used to provide eligible students with health, nutrition, and other social services,[41] if the school has established a partnership with local service providers and if funding from other outside sources is not available.[42] Federal education grants that support Community Schools include Title IV Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants); the Full Service Community Schools Program; 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants; School Improvement Grants; Promise Neighborhoods; and the Carol M. White Physical Education Program.[43]

For school-based health centers, Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) can reimburse the school for medical costs of low-income students. The Department of Justice also provides funding through the Community Prevention Grants Program, which supports delinquency prevention services, and the Juvenile Mentoring Grants Program, which supports mentoring services for at-risk youth.[44]

Furthermore, since 2015, 13 states have passed legislation to provide additional support to Community Schools.[45] Community Schools offer an opportunity to provide more comprehensive services for students by diversifying funding sources, including support from the private sector. Provisions of these additional services are a valuable asset in instructional transformation by supporting the whole child and ensuring that students receive the services they need to be ready to learn.

Resource Strategies to Support Culture Shift

The Culture Shift domain focuses on establishing a systemwide, collaborative culture with high academic expectations, committed to supporting students in their academic achievement and social and emotional well-being. To support a successful shift in culture, leadership must prioritize authentic engagement, as well as establish a culture that "values trust, respect, and high expectations."[46]

In this section, we offer two key strategies to create a collaborative culture around resource allocation decision-making, with the goal of leveraging diverse perspectives to ensure that resource allocation decisions are student-centered and equity-focused.

First, at the district level, it is important that staff across different divisions, such as fiscal and educational services, work together closely to align the budget with instructional priorities. Second, local leaders should utilize meaningful stakeholder engagement to gather outside perspectives on how best to meet students' needs. In each of these cases, the *diverse perspectives* and *expertise* of each group serve as critical resources to support turnaround efforts.

Cross-division collaboration to align the budget with student needs and district goals

While many district budget processes historically fall to the fiscal services division, leaders across other divisions — including educational services, human resources (HR), and special education — can offer critical insight into the districts' needs, and thus should be included as central partners in resource allocation discussions. Indeed, district and county leaders, as well as the public finance officials, have identified close collaboration between district divisions, particularly

Domain 4: Culture Shift

Domain descriptor: A successful turnaround depends on many people working together to achieve extraordinary results. Attaining the necessary level of commitment to achieve these results requires a dramatic culture shift toward both high academic expectations and concerted effort. A turnaround culture fuses strong community cohesion with high expectations for academic achievement; one without the other is insufficient. Leadership establishes the structures and opportunities for faculty and staff to work together around common goals, engendering a culture of mutual respect, shared responsibility, and focused attention on student learning. State, district, and school leaders engage families to support their children's learning and the overall turnaround effort. A strong school community attends to the culture both inside and outside the school, gathering input from stakeholders and gauging perceptions about the school and the turnaround effort. Students are challenged and supported to aim higher, work harder, and realize the satisfaction of accomplishment. A positive school climate reflects a supportive and fulfilling environment; learning conditions that meet the needs of all students; people sure of their roles and relationships in student learning; and a culture that values trust, respect, and high expectations.

fiscal and educational services staff, as a critical strategy to aligning district investments with district goals.[47]

Fiscal services leaders typically possess the strongest understanding of the district's budget, including allowable uses of various funds, financial obligations, and the long-term fiscal outlook. Meanwhile, educational services leaders, including the superintendent, typically identify and lead the system's strategy for improving student performance. However, when discussing potential strategies that affect staff — including distribution of staff talent, uses of staff time, and other strategies mentioned throughout earlier domains — leaders must consider the potential limitations posed by staff contracts, credentials, and other staff-related factors. In these matters, HR can advise on how best to adjust staffing practices while still complying with contractual obligations. Additionally, HR can help bring union leaders into the conversation, a strategy discussed later. Furthermore, to ensure that school improvement efforts allow students with disabilities to learn in the Least Restrictive Environment, special education services should be included in these discussions. Special education leaders may also hold insight on high-leverage strategies that have improved accessibility for students with disabilities, which can potentially be scaled schoolwide or districtwide to improve student outcomes for other target populations as well.

By establishing a collaborative process and structure for leaders across multiple divisions to participate in strategic budget planning together, for example, defining the base educational program (referred to in the section on Turnaround Leadership), the district can help ensure that each perspective enhances and supports the other. Similarly, if an improvement plan is drafted without the input of fiscal services early in the process, then it will likely miss opportunities for the strategic use of available funds and may need to be scaled back based on budget limitations. Instead, by closely collaborating throughout the budget development process, district leaders can keep instructional goals and improvement strategies at the forefront, with valuable input from other divisions on important factors to keep in mind. As part of this same conversation, fiscal services can then provide expertise on how available funds may be blended and braided to support the desired improvement efforts. This culture and practice of collaboration across district divisions can similarly be applied at the state level. State-level leaders in charge of managing federal improvement dollars can work in collaboration with the state budget office to develop resources for districts on how to maximize the use of improvement dollars — both in terms of information on the allowable uses of funds and on high-leverage improvement strategies.

Leveraging the resource of diverse perspectives through authentic stakeholder engagement

While various ESSA provisions,[48] as well as state laws, require local stakeholder engagement, the Culture Shift domain embraces stakeholder engagement as a valuable and integral practice, not just a compliance requirement. From a resource allocation point of view, authentic stakeholder engagement can indeed be a high-leverage, low-cost strategy that guides districts in the effective alignment of resources with student needs and school improvement goals. Stakeholders' diverse perspectives can provide additional insight into

students' backgrounds, needs, and the supports that would most effectively meet those needs. In this way, they can serve not only as advocates for students, but as productive thought-partners and consultants to help advise schools' improvement efforts.

Implementing effective stakeholder engagement requires a thoughtful, systematic approach. First, school and district leaders must identify key stakeholder groups, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, board members, union representatives, and community members, considering how each might contribute to the district's turnaround efforts. Leaders should work with each stakeholder group to define their roles, responsibilities, level of engagement, desired outcomes from their involvement, and how their involvement will be used to inform the decision-making process. To ensure that input is captured from a diverse and representative stakeholder group, engagement should make sure to accommodate needs such as providing accessible locations and times, interpretation or translation services, transportation, and child care services as needed.[49]

Student engagement offers a particularly powerful low-cost, high-leverage resource allocation strategy to support school improvement efforts. Students can provide relevant and timely feedback on their current education experience, needs, and goals, and they can help leaders identify gaps in the system and opportunities for improvement. Involving students directly in the engagement process can help ensure that decision-making remains focused on students, rather than adult interests.[50]

To enable stakeholders to provide as productive input as possible, it is important to prepare them with appropriate contextual information. This includes, for example, summaries of student data that highlight student performance areas in need of improvement, as well as an accessible overview of the district's financial situation and current per-pupil expenditures. This information provides stakeholders with a more thorough understanding of student performance gaps, available resources, and current district investments, allowing them to provide more informed feedback on how district resources can be most effectively aligned to students' needs.[51] While offering this level of fiscal transparency may represent a culture shift for many districts, local leaders report that when stakeholders have a clearer understanding of the district's full financial picture — including rising costs and obligations, such as pension contributions — they can provide more constructive, collaborative, and realistic recommendations.[52]

Conclusion

As school districts face mounting pressure to improve outcomes at low-performing schools during a period of increasingly constrained budgets, they must embrace new strategies for maximizing existing resources. This includes strategies for blending, braiding, or layering funds, as well as strategies for ensuring that limited resources are directed to programs with the greatest impact for students, and to students with the greatest needs. It may also require that some state and local leaders rethink how they conceive of the available resources and how those resources are distributed to support school turnaround.

The resource allocation strategies outlined in this paper are by no means exhaustive. Rather, they are intended to support state and local education leaders who are interested in pursuing a more comprehensive approach to school turnaround, one that de-emphasizes investments in specific new programs to drive improvement and focuses more on an aligned and integrated set of instructional and resource allocation strategies designed to eliminate inequities and realign resources around student needs. All four of the principles of effective resource allocation are critical to success across the Four Domains of School Turnaround.

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RESOURCE ALLOCATION STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE FOUR DOMAINS FOR RAPID SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT