**LEA provides operational flexibility to the principal to lead the transformation or turnaround. (1977)**

**Evidence Review:**
A handful of districts and states have adopted special provisions for low-performing, restructuring, or “high-priority” schools that allow principals to bypass tenure and seniority protections that otherwise would apply to all staff. Most of these policies, however, empower district leaders to initiate reconstitutions—automatically dismissing all employees in a school. Research suggests that reconstitution raises its own challenges, primarily regarding the supply of highly-effective teachers who are available to serve as replacements. Experience with reconstitution in the turnaround setting suggests that it is not always necessary or the most effective strategy. States and districts should therefore pursue special terms for turnaround schools that empower leaders to make their own, targeted decisions about their staff so that they can make personnel decisions based on the needs of the school, its students, and their specific goals for the turnaround, instead of the needs of adults. This may involve obtaining waivers for low-performing schools from tenure protections, seniority rights, and other job protections that typically apply to staff in all district schools. The goal of these policies should be to enable quick dismissals of that handful of teachers in low-performing schools who cannot or will not support the turnaround.


**References:**

**Evidence Review:**
Research and experience suggest that in chronically failing environments, the changes needed for success are often substantial (Roberto & Levesque, 2005). Arguably, organizations undergoing turnaround therefore need sufficient latitude to implement such substantial changes. Research about successful reform efforts in education provide some support for that conclusion: schools undertaking significant school reform, for example, appear to have a higher chance of success when the district allows as much freedom as possible from regulations regarding scheduling, transportation, discipline, and curriculum (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Gill, Zimmer, Christman, & Blanc, 2007; Rhim, 2005a). Case evidence from outside education offers similar findings.
In a study of the turnaround at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, for example, Garvin and Roberto (2005) document the turnaround leader’s insistence that the governing board cease to be involved in the day-to-day management of the Center, leaving him free to make necessary changes without their item-by-item permission. Research in the public sector reveals that without an extraordinary leader, lack of freedom to act quickly and decisively can severely hinder an organization’s ability to change (Paton & Mordaunt, 2004). Private-sector research indicates that requiring item-by-item permission by a unit for deviations from broader organization policies makes success less likely when the unit is attempting to succeed in an area of previous failure (Christensen, 1997).

Often, however, successful turnaround leaders are able to achieve results within larger policy or organizational constraints (Paton & Mordaunt, 2004). When they are not granted freedom to act, these leaders achieve results by working around rules and seeking approval after their strategy has worked, rather than asking for permission beforehand (Duke et al., 2005). Authority to hire and fire personnel or, alternatively, alter their working conditions was identified in multiple cases as an important freedom that influences effective turnaround (e.g., Duke et al., 2005; Goldstein et al., 1998; Pascale et al., 1997; Rhim, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). A more in-depth discussion of staff replacement in turnarounds is presented in the section on leader actions.

Turnarounds necessitate significant (i.e., second-order) changes that require a willingness to alter the basic organizational systems in place. Waters et al. refers to these types of changes as “breaking with the past,” even when the changes conflict with prevailing values and norms (2003, p. 7). Often, successful turnaround leaders are able to achieve results within larger policy or organizational constraints (Paton & Mordaunt, 2004). When they cannot, these leaders achieve results by working around rules and seeking approval after their strategy has worked, rather than asking for permission beforehand (Duke et al., 2005). In his examination of turnaround change, Fullan (2005) describes the importance of deviating from organizational policies as opportunities for “productive conflict” because they call for change that can create opportunities to do things differently and communicate that the status quo is not acceptable.

The case study literature contains rich examples of actions successful turnaround leaders were willing to take in order to implement real change, even if the change created conflict or discomfort among stakeholders (Almanzán, 2005; Appel, 2005; Brenneman, 1998; Buchanan, 2003; Burbach & Butler, 2005; Charles A. Dana Center, 1999; Doherty & Abernathy, 1998; Duke et al., 2005; Fullan, 2005; Galvin & Parsley, 2005; Garvin & Roberto, 2005; Hamel, 2000; Heimbouch, 2000; Hirschhorn, 2002; Kim & Mauborgne, 2003; Kotter, 1995; Meliones, 2000; Mordaunt & Cornforth, 2004; Mullen & Patrick, 2000; Olson, 1999; Pascale, Millermann, & Gioja, 1997; Paul, 2005; Reisner, 2002; Rhim, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Waters et al., 2003; Werkema & Case, 2005; Wilms et al., 1994). A clear example comes from Kim & Mauborgne’s (2003) analysis of the turnaround of New York’s police department. Though most drug related crime occurred
on the weekends, the city’s narcotics squad worked largely Monday through Friday. This was a long established organization routine, but it had to be challenged and altered in order to achieve better results. Since drug-related crimes accounted for a substantial portion of all crimes, this change emerged as a high-priority in the turnaround process. Literature on schools specifically offers other examples of these actions:

- Adjust teachers’ and paraeducators’ schedules to align with late buses to create opportunity for additional one-on-one instructional time (Duke et al., 2005);
- Carve out additional time for instruction, either by reallocating the school day or creating additional time beyond the school day (Charles A. Dana Center, 1999); and
- Assign assistant principals and instructional assistants working in the main office to work in classrooms (Duke et al., 2005).


References:


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