

Four Domains For Rapid School Improvement

Applying the Center on School Turnaround Four-Domain Framework to ongoing, sustainable school improvement.



Maryland State Department of Education
Leading for School Improvement
July 24, 2018



Introductory Activity: Accessing Knowledge



At your table, please hold a short conversation about each person's familiarity with the Four-Domain Framework (FDF).

One brave soul at your table should be prepared to share some of the observations and points made. The other brave souls at the table should all point at that brave soul.

School Turnaround: A Look Back



- 1983: A Nation At Risk, Commission on Excellence in Education
- 2001: No Child Left Behind
- 2009: School Improvement Grant Program: \$4.35 Billion
 - RTTT
 - ESEA Waivers
- 15 Years of Mixed Results; What Was Missing?
 - Results that were not just scalable but sustainable
 - Emphasis on the relationship of essential systems

What did we learn about school turnaround?



Change Efforts Fail When....



Which of these challenges may have slowed your own school improvement progress in the past?

Focused on too many priorities

Insufficiently rigorous in expectations

Inconsistent with research-based practice

Implemented and supported with little or no fidelity

Insufficiently monitored by a core team committed to success

Too rigid to allow necessary modification

Efforts also fail when...



- They are primarily top down
- They do not provide opportunities to learn from and with each other
- They do not acknowledge and reach out to apathetic and resistant stakeholders.

In complex change, everybody
is a leader and a learner.

“To Boldly Go...”



...Where many of us were once before”

Driving Assumptions about Turnaround



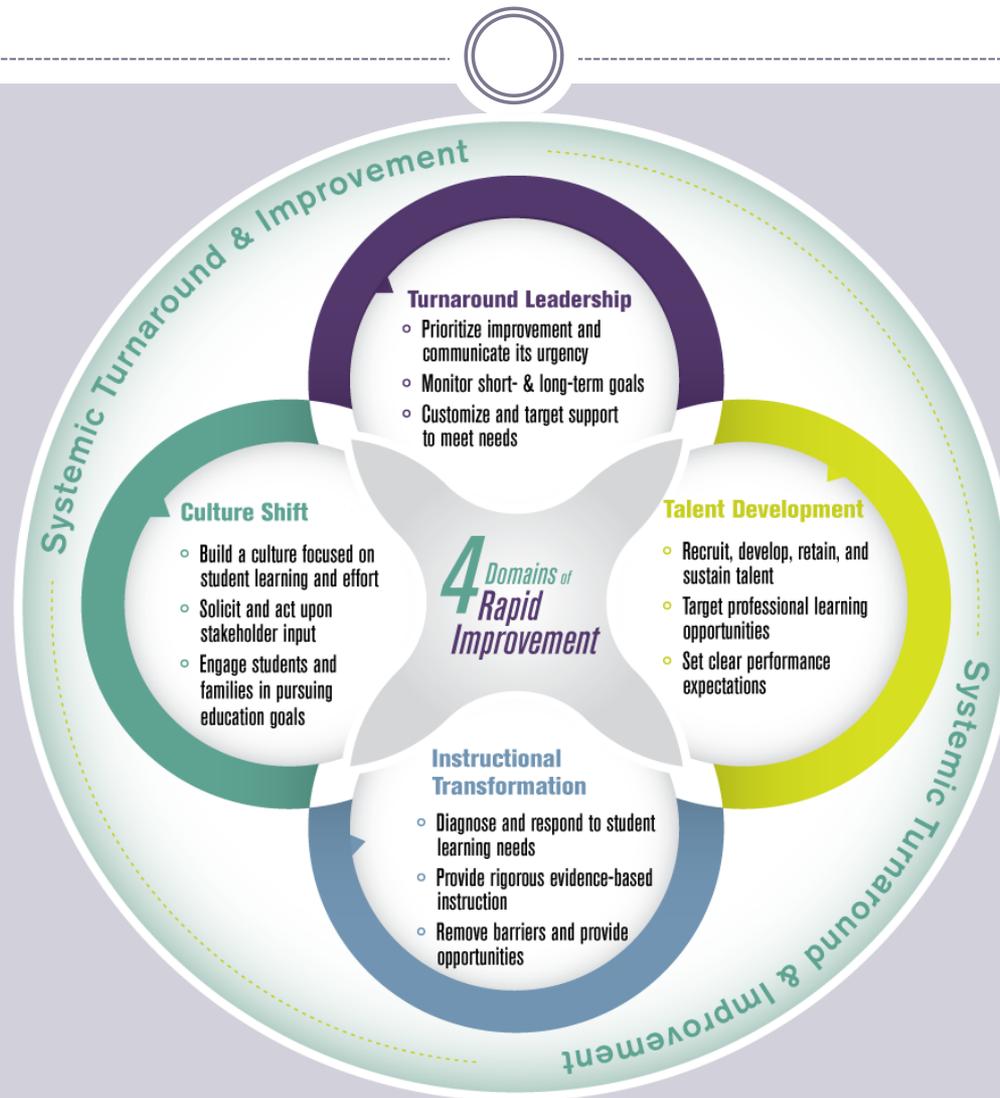
Influenced by local context and implementation

Requires a systems approach

More than the initial jolt of bold change

Not a linear process with defined steps that guarantee positive results

The 4 Domains of Rapid School Improvement



Sources for the Framework



Synthesized
Research

Practical
Experience

Input From
the Field

About the Framework Domains



Buckets of
large
conceptual
areas

Used to
group
practices
into
necessary
conditions
and
functions

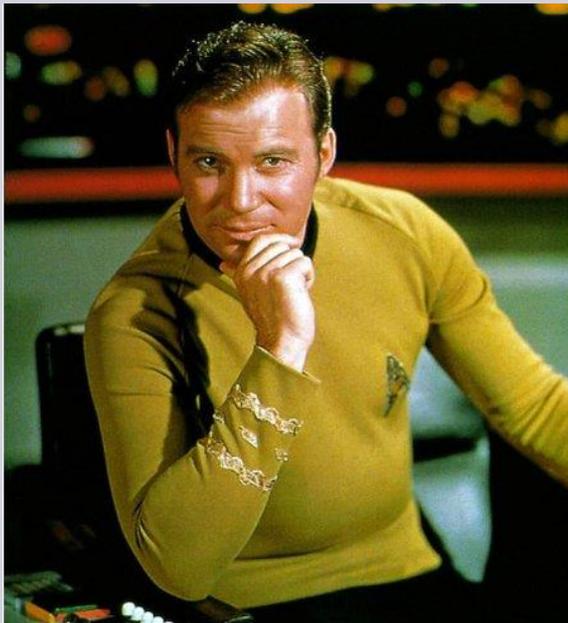
Include a
set of three
inter-
related
practices

Intended
to be
considered
in tandem

School Leaders are Systems Engineers



“Scotty, I need rapid and measurable school improvement on our current budget--in nine weeks!!!”



“Say *what*?!!”



The Framework and Essential Practices



Descriptors of the elements for each practice

The roles of the state, district, and school--each entity pivotal to school turnaround

Examples of how to enact the practice; meant to serve as examples, not a recipe or magic bullet!

A Framework Grounded in Understanding



- The framework reflects the understanding that local context and implementation influence the outcomes of any improvement initiative.
- It further reflects lessons learned from the federal School Improvement Grants program:
- A successful school turnaround requires a systems approach with coherent guidance and support from the state and district to complement the actions of the school; and
- A successful school turnaround is more than the initial jolt of bold changes in structure, authority, and personnel; it includes phases in which effective practices and processes are routinized and sustained.

A Framework for Sustainability



The 4-Domain Framework for Rapid School Turnaround...

- Is intended for SEA staff; district and school leaders.
- Includes strategies and supports at the SEA, LEA, and site level.
- Is a framework of field-based, empirical learnings about rapid school improvement.
- Defines and connects four critical and related systems.
- Presents no “magic bullet” but a map of considerations and responsibilities for education leaders at all levels.

The Framework is an Invitation...to You



Premise #1: School Turnaround and Improvement work is most effective when informed by sensitivity to and understanding of local context.

Premise #2: Research and empirical evidence suggest four interrelated domains essential to realizing rapid and sustainable school improvement:

Turnaround Leadership

Talent Development

Instructional Transformation

Cultural Shift

So, what do YOU think? What do you regard as essential?

Interacting with the Framework



- The Framework is only as valuable as education leaders determine it to be.
 - Your knowledge of your school and local context
 - Your experience
 - Your leadership
- Through this overview, consider the domains as an invitation to
 - Challenge them
 - Test them
 - Refine them
- Test the practices and actions against your own essentials for rapid and sustainable school improvement.

Domain 1: Turnaround Leadership



- Turnaround leaders at the state, local district, and school levels drive initiatives to facilitate rapid, significant improvement for low-performing schools.
- Turnaround leadership builds momentum for rapid improvement.
- 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.

Practices: Turnaround Leadership



- Prioritize efforts and communicate urgency
- Monitor short- and long-term goals
- Customize and target support

Practice 1A: Prioritize Improvement and Communicate Urgency



- Set the strategic direction for turnaround, and establish clear policies, structures, and expectations for constituents to work toward ambitious improvement goals.
- Articulate a commitment to turning around the lowest-performing schools and advocate fiercely across audiences for these schools.
- Closely monitor, discuss, report, and act upon the progress of schools undertaking rapid improvement.

Enacting the Practice: Urgency



- **State:** Develop agency capacity to lead turnaround initiatives; Advocate the social and moral imperative of school turnaround. Go public to garner parent and community support.
- **District:** Identify a senior district official to lead a team that oversees local turnaround, including overseeing principal support and development, districtwide data analysis, and overall strategy direction.
- **School:** Develop leadership teams within the school staff; build leadership capacity for turnaround through shared opportunities. And utilize the local media!

Self-Reflection: Turnaround Leadership



- What are your school turnaround goals?
- How do you define success regarding meeting school turnaround goals?
- What structure(s) or processes are in place to assess whether your efforts are successful?
- What measures will be monitored to identify successes and challenges in student outcomes for school turnaround?
- What is your plan for engaging parents and other community stakeholders in your turnaround process?
- What tools, systems, and structures are needed in order to provide flexibility to turnaround leadership?

Domain 2: Talent Development



- Turnaround requires deliberate thought about all aspects of talent management:
 - 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
- 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.

Practices: Talent Development



- Recruit, develop, retain and sustain talent
- Target professional learning opportunities
- Set clear performance expectations for every role

Recruit, develop, retain, and sustain talent



- **State:** Develop and disseminate human resources practices designed to identify, extend, and support turnaround competencies in leaders and teachers.
- **District:** Challenge and support human resources staff to design programs that identify and support the development of potential turnaround leaders and teachers.
- **School:** Utilize the district turnaround talent pool as the “go-to” source for hiring assistant principals and teachers.

Domain 3: Instructional Transformation



Improvement in student learning outcomes depends on system-wide support for high-level instructional practice, including:

- Strong standards-based instruction
- Data-based planning
- Differentiation and individualization
- Research-based pedagogical approaches
- Classroom management

Practices: Instructional Transformation



- Diagnose and respond to student learning needs
- Provide rigorous evidence-based and standards-aligned instruction
- Remove structural and procedural barriers and provide student-centered opportunities

Domain 4: Culture Shift



- Culture Shift occurs not just at the tactical level but at much deeper levels of an organization; creating a shared commitment and connection to mutual values.
- Leaders establish structures and opportunities for faculty and staff to work together toward common goals, building capacity for shared decision-making.
- A positive school climate reflects a supportive and fulfilling environment, learning conditions that meet the needs of all students, and a culture of trust, respect, and high expectations.
- A turnaround culture depends on collaboration to achieve extraordinary results, fusing strong community cohesion with academic focus.

Practices: Culture Shift



- Build strong school community focused on student learning
- Solicit and act upon input from stakeholders
- Engage students and families in pursuing education goals

Jigsaw Activity: Four Domains



- **3 Minutes:** At tables: participants divide evenly to form four groups and assign four domains.
- **8 Minutes:** Once in groups, participants read the assigned domain and highlight/take notes to address two inquiries:
 - What are the key ideas and threads across the leadership levels?
 - What are the key take-aways and implications for school and district level leaders?
- **5 Minutes:** Each domain-group discusses and compares individual findings and identifies 1-2 implications of the domain on their work as school leaders.
- **12 Minutes:** Each domain group shares its findings with the whole group. Facilitator will chart responses.
- **4 Minutes:** Report-out

Two Important Understandings



Local context and implementation influence the outcome of any improvement undertaking.

State, district, and school leaders who implement the practices found here in a contextualized fashion can strengthen the education ecosystem at each level.

No single strategy alone can yield the scale and scope of improvement that is needed.

Turnaround approaches that reflect the nexus of all four domains are more likely to achieve systemic, sustainable high-level improvement rather than moments of excellence.

Exploring Implications of the Four Domains



- Review the questions on slips at your table
- For each question, discuss and prepare a response based on
 - Information from today
 - Your perspectives and roles
 - Your school's context and your school improvement needs

The brave soul selected as reporter for this activity must be someone other than the brave soul selected prior.

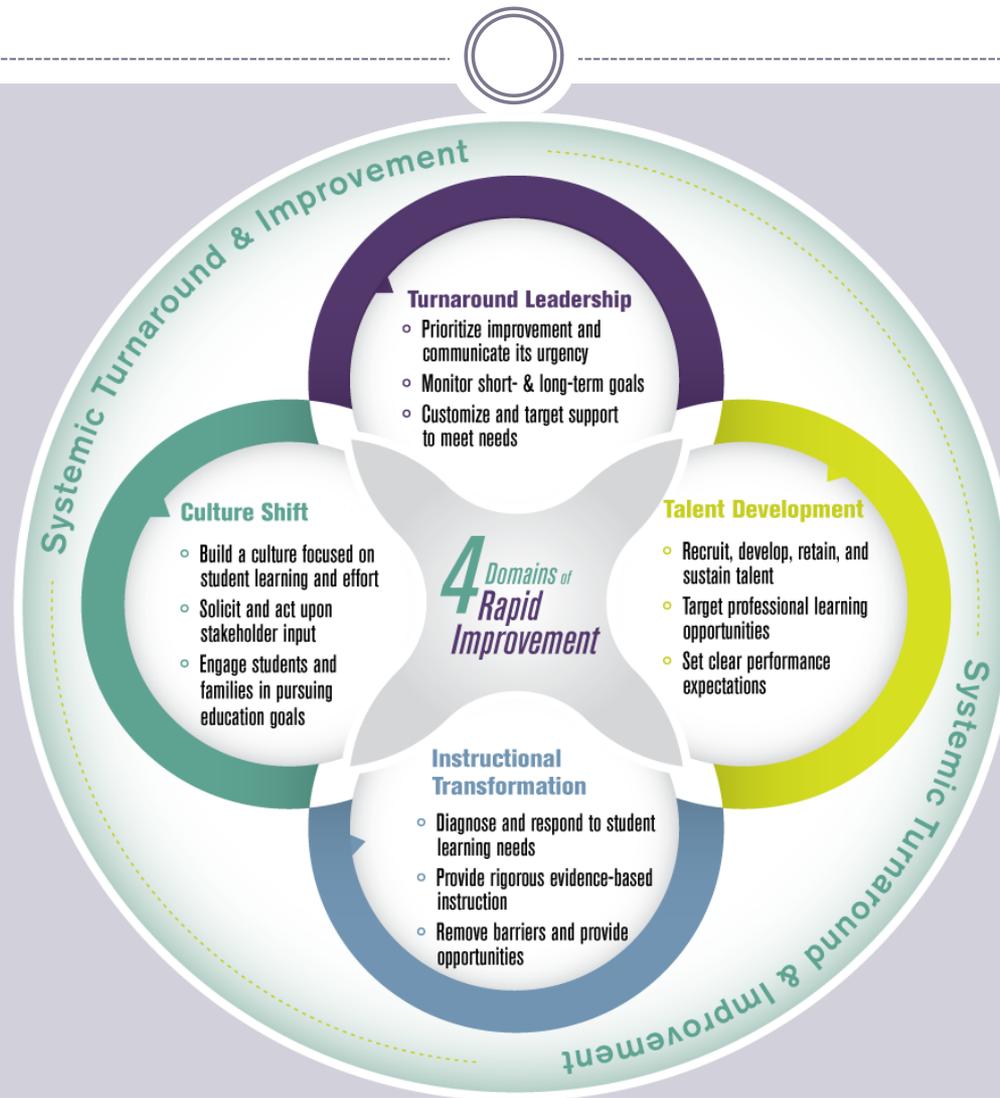
Moving Forward



Whom at your site do you as the school leader need to engage in a discussion about the Four-Domain Framework?

Going forward through this conference.

The 4 Domains of Rapid School Improvement



Questions? Reflections?



Thank you for the privilege of presenting
to you today.

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Sources/Citation Info



The Center on School Turnaround. (2017). Four domains for rapid school improvement: A systems framework [The Center for School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Center on School Turnaround: <http://centeronschoolturnaround.org>