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**Appendix A 1 i 1: Dec 8 Regent Item: Update on School Turnaround /Restart/ Closure/
Transformation Strategies**



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: EMSC Committee

FROM: John B. King, Jr.

SUBJECT: Update on School
Turnaround/Restart/Closure/Transformation Strategies

DATE: December 8, 2009

STRATEGIC GOAL: Goals 1 and 2

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

What actions can the Board of Regents and the Department take to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in turnaround, restart, school closure or transformation activities with persistently low-achieving schools?

Procedural History

At the Regents meetings in June, July, September and November 2009, Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch and Regent Lester W. Young provided updates on activities related to New York State's Race to the Top (RTTT) application planning and strategy. One key area of Race to the Top involves how states will support local educational agencies (LEAs) in turning around schools that are persistently lowest-achieving. In December, Department staff will review with the Regents the proposed methodology for identifying these schools. This companion item provides recommendations on policy decisions, changes to Commissioner's regulations, and items for inclusion in the Regents legislative priorities that will build a robust infrastructure to support the efforts of LEAs to intervene successfully in persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Background Information

New York's vision for educational excellence is focused on the centrality of the teaching and learning experience in the classroom supported by the synergistic efforts of state, regional, district, and school-based infrastructures. The vision is depicted in Figure 1.

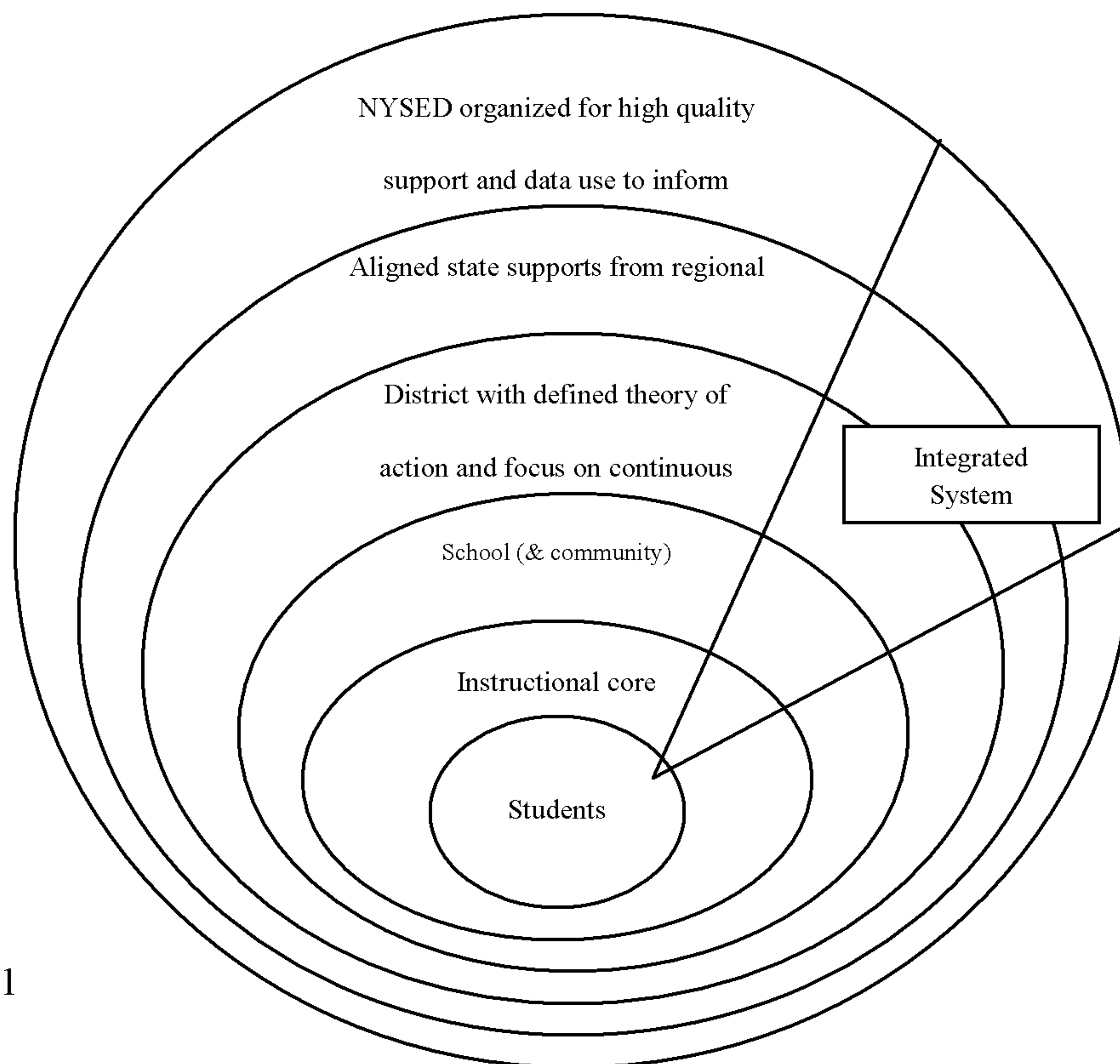


Figure 1

Among the areas encompassed by this vision are:

Local Accountability for Student Success:

- LEAs must be encouraged to:
 - Redesign school programs to increase graduation rates for at-risk students and provide instructional programs, including the use of on-line learning, that prepare students for the 21st century global economy.
 - Determine appropriate school turnaround and replacement strategies, and use Title I School Improvement, Race to the Top and other funds to support bold new reform efforts in schools that are persistently lowest-achieving.

State Level Leadership for Change:

- The State Education Department must:
 - Transform from a compliance-oriented agency to a service-oriented agency focused on providing technical assistance to districts on preparing students for college, the global economy, 21st century citizenship, and lifelong learning. This effort will build on past analyses/evaluations of the department.

- Increase the State's capacity to support district-led improvement and replacement strategies, while at the same time exercising the Commissioner's authority to close chronically underperforming schools.

For more than twenty years, the Board of Regents have had in place a process by which the Commissioner annually identifies those schools that are farthest from State standards and most in need of improvement. These schools are placed under registration review. LEAs with identified schools are required to develop plans for turning these schools around and are provided support by the State Education Department to implement these plans. If improvement in student achievement does not occur, LEAs must phase-out and close these schools or the Commissioner will recommend to the Board of Regents that the school's registration be revoked. This process has helped to improve academic performance in more than 200 schools. At the same time, the process has also resulted in the closure of more than 60 schools that failed to achieve performance targets established by the Commissioner.

With the United States Department of Education announcement of the Race to the Top (RTTT) fund application, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department have an unprecedented opportunity to build upon these successes. One of the four key selection criteria in the application is the State's plan for turning around its persistently lowest-achieving schools. Persistently lowest-achieving schools are schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are among the lowest-achieving in the State in terms of student proficiency in ELA or mathematics or have graduation rates below 60% for a number of years.

RTTT guidelines highlight four effective models for dramatic school intervention in persistently lowest-achieving schools: the turnaround model; the restart model; school closure; and the transformation model. LEAs that have schools that have been identified as persistently lowest-achieving will be required to select one of the four models and submit an intervention plan to the Commissioner for approval. These models all include elements of intervention strategies that have already been implemented in New York State.

Recommendations:

In order to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps by turning around the State's persistently lowest achieving schools, Department staff recommend that the Regents:

- 1) Pursue a framework for dramatic school intervention, which includes direct management of schools by external lead partners and possible creation of Partnership Zones¹. This framework will be implemented statewide in selected schools.

¹ For an example of how this framework might work, see Mass Insight report, *The Turnaround Challenge* (2007).

- 2) Use Federal funds and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to create a statewide Technical Assistance Center for Innovation and Turnaround (TACIT) to support the implementation of the school intervention models. In addition, we recommend expanding the use of federal school improvement funds (1003(g) funds [20 USC §6303(g)]) to support LEAs that voluntarily opt-in to use of the four intervention models before schools are identified as persistently lowest-achieving.
- 3) Create a State Education Department Office of Innovative School Models (OISM). Through OISM, lowest-achieving schools will have the opportunity to apply for competitive grants to support community based organization implementation of Full Service Models that include academic, social/emotional, and health supports and Extended Learning Time.
- 4) Support the implementation of this plan by establishing the following legislative priorities:
 - the authorization of educational management organizations (EMOs) to directly manage schools (including budget, staffing decisions, the daily schedule and yearly calendar, etc.);
 - raising the charter school cap to facilitate the creation of new charter schools, particularly secondary schools, focused on serving high need populations of students, i.e., low-income students, students at Level 1 or Level 2 performance on the NY State assessments, over-age and under-credited high school students, English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities (SWDs). As part of raising the cap:
 - Encourage authorizing single Board governance of multiple schools with a common management entity, the provision of pre-K education by charter schools, strengthen equitable funding for charter schools, and access to facilities financing for charters;
 - Ensure that charter school funding, student enrollment policies, and all charter board and school-level practices are fully transparent and their actions and results fully accountable to public authority; and continue to evaluate the local impact of placing new charter schools into particular communities.
 - authorizing the Commissioner to order – in extraordinary circumstances – an LEA to convert a struggling school into a charter school; and
 - authorizing charter schools access to BOCES services.
- 5) Establish as a legislative priority expansion of the authority of the Board of Regents to intervene in LEAs that have been declared chronically under performing and give the Regents the authority to designate a three- member team who would assume the responsibilities of an Education Oversight Board of the district with all the powers of the School Board.
- 6) Amend Commissioner’s regulations to:
 - allow newly created schools to seek operational waivers at the time of registration;
 - align the process for identification of the Schools Under Registration Review and persistently lowest achieving schools (as described in a separate report to the Regents);

- ensure that each LEA's annual professional performance review plan requires timely and constructive feedback and that the evaluation include performance data for that teacher's students; and
 - expand the means by which students can earn high school credit (or receive a high school diploma) based on completion of competencies, including the achievement of credit through successful virtual/on-line course completion.
- 7) Create innovative secondary schools, including developing a Virtual High school, in order to improve graduation rates.

With the concurrence of the Regents, Department staff will incorporate these concepts in New York's Race to the Top application and develop amendments to Commissioner's regulations for consideration by the Regents later this school year.

Proposed Plan for Turning Around Persistently Low-Achieving Schools

RTTT guidelines highlight four models for dramatic school intervention in persistently lowest-achieving schools: the turnaround model; the restart model; school closure; and the transformation model. LEAs that have schools that have been identified as persistently lowest-achieving will be required to select one of the four models and submit an intervention plan to the Commissioner for approval. These same models must also be used by LEAs that receive Title I School Improvement Grants. These models all include elements of intervention strategies that have already been implemented in New York State.

Intervention Models and Requirements as Defined by Race to the Top

In the **turnaround** model, the principal is replaced along with fifty percent of the current staff. In addition, the LEA must:

- use local competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff;
- grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility regarding staffing, calendars/time, and budget;
- provide incentives and flexible working conditions to attract and retain skilled teachers;
- provide staff with ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development;
- adopt a new governance structure, which may include requiring the school to report to a LEA turnaround office or State turnaround office;
- hire a turnaround leader (external lead partner) who reports directly to the Superintendent, or enter into a multi-year contract with the LEA or State to obtain greater operational flexibility in exchange for greater accountability;
- promote the continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction;
- establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time; and
- provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

In the **restart** model, the LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under the management of an external lead partner (i.e., charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization). The new or converted school must allow students from the former school to attend. The external lead partner contracts directly with the LEA, and is directly responsible for the operation of the school and accountable for dramatic increases in student achievement.

School closure occurs when a LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools within the LEA that are higher achieving.

Under the **transformation** model, the LEA is required to implement all of the following strategies:

- replace the principal in the persistently low-achieving school;

- use a rigorous and equitable evaluation system for teachers and principals;
- identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates, and identify/remove those who, after ample professional development, have not increased student achievement;
- provide staff with ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development;
- provide incentives and flexible working conditions to attract and retain skilled teachers;
- use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned across grades and with State standards;
- promote the continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction;
- establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time;
- provide on-going mechanisms for family and community engagement, which may include appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students;
- allow the school operational flexibility (in staffing, time, and budgeting) to implement a comprehensive program to dramatically increase student achievement; and
- ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, State, and/or a designated external lead partner organization, such as an educational management organization (EMO).

Race to the Top Proposed Plan for Struggling Schools

In Race to the Top, the state is required to provide a high-quality and ambitious plan to support LEAs in turning around persistently lowest-achieving schools. Department staff recommend that New York's plan include the following steps:

1. The Commissioner will identify persistently lowest achieving schools.
2. LEAs, with support from the Technical Assistance Center for Innovation and Turnaround (TACIT), will choose one of the four school intervention models.
3. With support from the TACIT, LEAs will choose partners to facilitate dramatic school change.
4. LEAs will adopt a governance structure to oversee the implementation of the intervention model, for example an internal LEA turnaround office, a Partnership Zone or an external lead partner.
5. LEAs, in collaboration with partners will develop an Intervention Plan, including measurable benchmarks, based upon the chosen model.
6. The Commissioner will appoint a panel consisting of members of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) and Distinguished Educators (DEs) to review the Intervention Plans. The panel will make one of the three recommendations to the Commissioner:
 - accept the LEA's Intervention Plan.
 - accept the LEA's Intervention Plan on the condition that the suggested revisions are made; or
 - return the LEA's proposal and require the LEA to submit a new Plan.
7. The LEA and partners will implement the approved Intervention Plan.

Two concepts are central to New York State's successful implementation of the proposed RTTT plan.

First, LEAs must provide identified schools with the *operational flexibility* (staffing, time, and budgeting) to implement a comprehensive plan for dramatic intervention. This can be accomplished by the LEA adoption of a governance structure where schools are given operational autonomy with increased accountability.

Secondly, *partners* must be used to facilitate dramatic school change. Ideally, a lead partner will be identified who will sign a 3-5 year performance contract for student achievement with the LEA and collaborate with the LEA to define both the operational autonomies needed to implement the selected model, and the accountability outcomes that signal success. The partner will have a consistent and intense on-site relationship with each school, for five days a week over the two to three year turnaround period. A partner involved in the creation of a new school, under the restart model, can also work with the LEA to request operational waivers regarding staffing, time, and budgeting.

Through a rigorous process focused on proven success in raising the achievement of high needs students and demonstration of capacity, the State will pursue educational management organizations (EMOs), charter management organizations (CMOs), institutions of higher education (including SUNY and CUNY), and internal LEA offices as possible lead partners. The Regents will also pursue legislative changes that allow the delegation of school management to educational management organizations.

These concepts are outlined in Mass Insight's 2007 Report, *The Turnaround Challenge*. This report, which U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently called "the bible of school turnaround," provides an ambitious framework for approaching intervention in persistently lowest-achieving schools.

State Level Leadership for Change

The primary support mechanisms for implementation of this plan are the Technical Assistance Center for Innovation and Turnaround (TACIT) and the New York State Education Department Office for Innovative School Models (OISM).

The Technical Assistance Center for Innovation and Turnaround (TACIT) will serve LEAs with persistently lowest-achieving schools by:

- gathering and disseminating research to LEAs on effective intervention strategies, especially as it relates to English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). This would lead to evolving, common, highly effective strategies across the State;
- providing technical assistance to LEAs on the most appropriate intervention option for each school based upon the needs of the LEA and the school community;
- assisting the LEA in the development of the plan for the selected intervention option;

- developing LEA capacity in the following areas: adopting a new LEA governance structure; gathering and analysis of data for programmatic planning; human resource management, including developing locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff; job-embedded professional development; financial planning and budget allocation;
- coordinating the professional development services available through the network of regional SED Leadership Academies;
- identifying external lead partners to work with LEAs selecting the restart or transformation models; and
- expanding the potential pool of external lead partners through outreach and technical assistance.

In addition, the New York State Education Department (SED) Office for Innovative School Models (OISM) will support the activities of TACIT. The main work of the OISM will be to establish the policy and operating conditions in LEAs that enable school change. OISM will report directly to the Commissioner regarding the activities of the TACIT, and the progress of LEAs intervening in the persistently lowest-achieving schools. This office will have expertise and/or have access to experts in grants management/compliance; procurement; contract management; human capital management; and state policy. The OISM will ensure that the LEAs use competitive grant opportunities such as the Secondary School Innovation Fund and Virtual High School to support their efforts.

Finally, OISM will collaborate with the Office of Higher Education to ensure support for new leadership through the SED regional network of Leadership Academies.

OISM, in conjunction with the TACIT, will assist the LEA in designing new policies and structures including staffing, faculty incentives and rewards, governance, student enrollment practices and instructional programs. The OISM will work with the LEA to identify waivers for which the LEA may wish to apply when registering new schools as a result of the implementation of a restart or turnaround model.

Recommendations

In order to support the Regents agenda for turning around persistently lowest-achieving schools, and for each of the RTTT intervention model requirements to be met, staff recommends that the Regents adopt the following policy, regulatory and legislative agenda:

Create the Statewide Infrastructure to Support LEAs in Turning Around Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools

We recommend the Regents endorse the following strategies:

- 1) Pursue a framework for dramatic school intervention, which includes direct management of schools by external lead partners and possible of creation of Partnership Zones². This framework will be implemented statewide in selected schools.
- 2) Use Federal funds and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to create a statewide Technical Assistance Center for Innovation and Turnaround (TACIT) to support the implementation of the school intervention models.
- 3) Create a State Education Department Office of Innovative School Models (OISM). Through OISM, lowest-achieving schools will have the opportunity to apply for competitive grants for community based organizations to implement Full Service Models that include academic, social/emotional, and health supports (e.g., Say Yes, Community Schools, Beacon) and Extended Learning Time.
- 4) Amend Commissioner's regulations to expand the means by which students can earn high school credit based on completion of competencies, including the achievement of credit through successful virtual/on-line course completion

Create the Conditions to Allow LEAs to Leverage External Resources

We recommend that the Regents include in their legislative agenda changes to statute to:

- 5) Authorize educational management organizations (EMOs) to directly manage schools (including budgets, staffing decisions, the daily schedule and yearly calendar, etc.). Education Law §355(2)(n) authorizes SUNY to enter into a contract with the board of education of a city or LEA in which the State-operated institution is located. Education Law §2590-K, empowers the New York City Board of Education and CUNY to enter into a contract to administer not more than five high schools. Similar provisions would be necessary to allow EMOs to enter into contracts with LEAs to operate one or more schools.
- 6) Upon a determination by the Board of Regents that a school district has failed to improve the academic performance of students attending school in that district over a three-year period, the Education Commissioner shall appoint an independent fact-finding team to assess the reasons for the under-performance and the prospects for improvement. Upon review of the conclusions of the fact-finding team, the Regents may declare the district chronically under-performing. Following such a declaration, the Regents shall designate a three- member team who would assume the responsibilities of an Education Oversight Board of the district with all the powers of the School Board. NYSED would not directly manage the district. The Education Oversight Board will have the authority to choose a new superintendent should they so decide. The Education Oversight Board shall report directly to the Education Commissioner and serve at the discretion of the Commissioner.

² For an example of how this framework might work, see Mass Insight report, *The Turnaround Challenge* (2007).

- 7) Create incentives to encourage CMOs to convert persistently lowest-achieving schools or to create new charter schools to replace failing schools by establishing the following legislative priorities:
- the amendment of the charter school law to facilitate the creation of new charter schools, particularly secondary schools, focused on serving high need populations of students (i.e., low-income students, students at Level 1 performance on the NYS assessments, over-age and under-credit high school students, ELLs and SWDs). As part of that amendment, encourage authorizing single Board governance of multiple schools with a common management entity, the provision of pre-K education by charters, equitable funding for charters, and expanded access to facilities financing for charters.
 - authorizing the Commissioner to order – in extraordinary circumstances – an LEA to convert a struggling school into a charter school.
 - authorizing charter schools access to BOCES services.

Create the Conditions to Support Innovative Models of Schooling

We recommend that the Regents amend Commissioner's Regulations to:

- 8) Allow newly created schools to seek operational waivers at the time of registration. By allowing newly created schools to seek waivers at the time of registration, the Regents can encourage innovative approaches to school intervention that are tailored to student needs.

We recommend the Regents adopt the following policies:

- 9) Use RTTT to create an Innovative Secondary Schools Model Incentive Fund. The fund would serve as an incentive for eligible LEAs with schools in need of improvement, corrective action or restructuring status to implement programs using innovative models in partnership with institutions of higher education, leaders in business and industry in local communities, management agencies, and other profit/nonprofit organizations. Provide LEAs, in partnership with various stakeholders, the autonomy to support, stimulate, engage and sustain customized pathways to high school completion by launching innovative model schools. These models can be centered on themes, such as (but not limited to):
- secondary schools focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM);
 - virtual/blended secondary schools;
 - secondary schools for the Arts;
 - Career and Technical secondary schools;
 - Museum secondary schools;
 - Language Acquisition secondary schools; and

- Full-service secondary schools supported by cross-agency partnerships and community-based organizations (CBOs).

Appendix A 1 i 2: RTTT Project Timeline

Goals	Key Activities/Milestones	2010				2011				2012				2013				2014	
		Pre-Q1	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Overall Redesign NYSED Organization Assurance B: Standards and Assessments																			
Implement new Common Core Standards in ELA and Math	Engage key stakeholders around Common Core standards																		
	Issue RFP to begin process of developing state-wide curriculum frameworks for grades P-12 based on the Common Core ELA and math standards																		
	Develop English language arts and mathematics curriculum frameworks, which will include curriculum guidance for teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities																		
Develop comprehensive assessment system integrating formative, interim, and summative assessments aligned to the Common Core	Develop additional curriculum frameworks, beginning with science and technology																		
	Sign MOU/MOA with 3 Consortium for the development of Common Assessments																		
	Apply for the Federal Assessment Program as part of a multi-state consortium																		
Develop, disseminate, and implement a statewide network strategy for sustained intensive professional development on the new standards, curriculum frameworks, and assessments	Begin curriculum framework development																		
	Draft and issue two RFPs, based upon the Common Core standards, for performance-based formative assessment collection, development and dissemination																		
	Award RFPs and begin task collection, development, and dissemination will begin																		
Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of learning standards and develop aligned curriculum frameworks and assessments	Begin work of the College and Career Readiness Working Group																		
	Issue RFP for development of online professional development course offerings for P-20 educators																		
	Communicate to support transition to new standards and assessments; Engage all stakeholders																		
Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of learning standards and develop aligned curriculum frameworks and assessments	Facilitate development of train-the-trainer models to provide Teacher Center facilitators and identified staff with content and frameworks to provide professional development																		
	Expand use of its VLS web portal to include PD opportunities for P-20 educators and promote the availability of these opportunities																		
	Develop strategic supports for integration of the new curriculum frameworks and standards across the USNY organizations																		
Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of learning standards and develop aligned curriculum frameworks and assessments	Complete Science and Technology curriculum frameworks																		
	Complete Economics, the Arts, Social Studies, and Languages other than English curriculum frameworks																		
Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of learning standards and develop aligned curriculum frameworks and assessments	Complete curriculum frameworks in other content areas as approved by the Board of Regents																		

