

## Overview

This policy briefing discusses the authority of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education to intervene in low-performing public schools and districts in their respective states. Included in this policy briefing is a focus on the 5-tier accountability system used in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to aid low-performing public schools and school districts. Specifically, this policy briefing covers Massachusetts' distinct feature of receivership of schools or districts, which grants a level of authority to the Commonwealth to intervene in chronically low-performing schools and districts. Additionally, highlighted in this policy briefing is State of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Plan and the authority of the State to intervene in low-performing school districts, including assigning district improvement officers.

## Introduction

Massachusetts has a robust system of school and school district accountability, which was first implemented in preparation for its Race to the Top (RTT) application for federal funding in 2009. Massachusetts was one of 12 states awarded an RTT grant in 2010,<sup>1</sup> which assisted the state in implementing a variety of education reforms, including a 5-tier system of accountability for school districts, which was in place for nine years.<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) updated the accountability framework as a part of the state's plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015.<sup>3</sup> Known as the Next Generation Accountability System, the new plan removed the previous accountability and assistance levels<sup>^</sup> and replaced them with accountability categories that "define the progress that schools are making and the type of support they may receive" from the DESE, and added additional indicators of student success such as student growth, English language proficiency, chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, and the percentage of students completing advanced coursework.<sup>4</sup>

Massachusetts' original accountability model was codified under the Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, passed by the Massachusetts legislature in 2010, which granted the commissioner of the DESE broad powers to intervene in low-performing schools and districts,<sup>5</sup> up to and including assigning a state receiver to manage the lowest performing one percent of school districts in the state.<sup>6</sup> Although Massachusetts has changed its accountability tiers and structure, the state statute regarding receivership is still in effect.<sup>7</sup>

Massachusetts' tiered accountability plan is defined by progressively proscriptive state interventions the lower a school's or district's academic performance, although the tiers

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<sup>^</sup> Despite the official renaming of accountability levels, chronically underperforming districts are still referred to as "Level 5" districts in DESE communications.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). Chronically Underperforming Districts: Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/faq.html>.

and interventions have been somewhat loosened in the most recent iteration of the accountability model.<sup>8</sup> Districts are now placed in accountability tiers based on overall performance. Under the new system, a district may have underperforming schools or subgroups. For example, under the previous accountability system, districts with one or more schools in a given level were automatically placed at the level of their lowest-performing school.<sup>9</sup> A summary of the full accountability model can be seen in the chart below.

### Massachusetts Next Generation Accountability System<sup>10,11</sup>

Tier	Definition	Requirements	Interventions
Meeting Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting proficiency gap-narrowing goals</li> <li>Criterion-referenced target 75% or higher</li> <li>More than 66.7% of students graduate</li> <li>Assessment participation rate for all groups is 95% or higher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider analyzing disaggregated data for all student groups</li> <li>Review and revise district and school improvement plans in accordance with DESE's standards and guidelines</li> <li>Disseminate school report cards to parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Districts meeting targets are not identified as requiring targeted interventions or supports</li> </ul>
Partially Meeting Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criterion-referenced target percentage is less than 75%</li> <li>More than 66.7% of students graduate</li> <li>Assessment participation rate is 95 percent or higher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze disaggregated data for all student groups to insure interventions are appropriately aligned to address needs</li> <li>Review and revise district and school improvement plans in accordance with DESE's standards and guidelines</li> <li>Disseminate school report cards to parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Districts partially meeting targets are not identified as requiring targeted interventions or supports</li> </ul>
Focused / Targeted Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than 66.7% of students graduate</li> <li>The assessment participation rate for one or more groups is less than 95%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze disaggregated data for all student groups to insure interventions are appropriately aligned to address</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priority for support and technical assistance from DESE's Statewide System of</li> </ul>

Tier	Definition	Requirements	Interventions
		<p>needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the DESE Turnaround Plan, or District Self-Assessment to review and revise district and school improvement plans in accordance with DESE's standards and guidelines</li> <li>• Disseminate school report cards to parents</li> </ul>	<p>Support (SSoS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring Site Visits</li> <li>• Turnaround Site Visits</li> </ul>
Broad / Comprehensive Support - Underperforming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DESE commissioner and the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) designate the district as underperforming based on findings from a district review or monitoring report showing serious deficiencies relating to one or more district standards that are likely to have a negative effect on student performance if not addressed effectively in a timely manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with the DESE to develop an underperforming district plan to accelerate district improvement and strengthen its support and intervention efforts in its lowest performing schools</li> <li>• Disseminate school report cards to parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted assistance from the DESE</li> <li>• Priority for support and technical assistance from DESE's SSoS</li> <li>• Monitoring Site Visits</li> <li>• Turnaround Site Visits</li> </ul>
Broad / Comprehensive Support – Chronically Underperforming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scores in the lowest 10% statewide, based on regulations adopted by the BESE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SBESE holds a public meeting before entering the district into receivership</li> <li>• Submit to state receivership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District review team assesses and reports on the reasons for underperform</li> </ul>

Tier	Definition	Requirements	Interventions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upon recommendation by the DESE commissioner, the BESE may designate a district as chronically underperforming on the basis of a district review, the report of a DESE accountability monitor, a follow-up review report, quantitative indicators set out in state regulations, or failure of an underperforming district to meet DESE-approved benchmarks or goals in its improvement plan in a timely manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate under joint district-DESE governance.</li> <li>The DESE commissioner and receiver jointly create a turnaround plan to promote the rapid improvement of the chronically underperforming district</li> </ul>	<p>ance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State receiver assigned to district with broad oversight of educational and administrative functions</li> </ul>

### Receivership in Massachusetts<sup>B</sup>

The most distinct feature of the Massachusetts system is the level of authority granted to the State to intervene in chronically low-performing schools and districts. The authorizing legislation grants authority to the DESE commissioner to appoint a state receiver to “Level 5” districts. While the decision to assign Level 5 status is entirely in the purview of the commissioner, only 2.5 percent of school districts in the state can be designated as Level 5 at any given time. The state receiver is granted broad authority to oversee all school district operations, including the powers normally granted to both the superintendent and school committee<sup>C</sup> of a district.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Process by Which a Receiver is Appointed to a School District**

If a school district has scored in the lowest 10 percent of school districts statewide in student achievement and student growth, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and

<sup>B</sup> Portions of this section quote, or substantially paraphrase, the statutory language, as cited in the endnotes of this policy briefing.

<sup>C</sup> A school committee is the Massachusetts equivalent to a board of education in Connecticut.

Secondary Education (BESE) must deem the district eligible for Level 5 status. The metric by which districts are measured is set by BESE regulations.<sup>13</sup> The Next Generation Accountability System contains both an accountability percentile, known as the normative component, and a metric that measure's the district's growth toward academic targets, known as the criterion-referenced target percentage.<sup>14</sup> Following the determination by the BESE, the commissioner appoints a district review team to assess and report on the reasons for underperformance and the prospects for improvement. Upon review of the findings of the district review team, the BESE may declare the district as chronically underperforming (otherwise known as Level 5 designation). After designating a district as chronically underperforming, the BESE must appoint a state receiver, which can be a nonprofit entity or an individual. The receiver must have a demonstrated record of success in improving low-performing schools or student achievement among disadvantaged students.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, if a municipality has failed to meet its funding obligations under Chapter 70, Massachusetts's school finance statute,<sup>D</sup> the commissioner may declare the district chronically underperforming, subject to the approval of the SBESE. The commissioner may petition the commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) to require an increase in funds for the school district. If the municipality does not comply, the DOR commissioner will not approve the tax rate of the municipality until the deficiency is alleviated.<sup>16</sup>

### **Turnaround Plans Under Receivership**

The receiver and the DESE commissioner jointly create a turnaround plan for the district to promote the rapid improvement of the district, which focuses specifically on the school(s) in the district that have been designated as chronically underperforming schools. Before the creation of the turnaround plan, the commissioner and receiver must convene a local stakeholder group of 13 local education stakeholders, including the superintendent, representatives from the board of education, teachers, and administrators from the district. The stakeholder group must make recommendations to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic achievement of students to the commissioner and receiver within 45 days of its first meeting. The commissioner must provide "due consideration" to these recommendations but is not otherwise bound to include them in the turnaround plan.<sup>17</sup>

The turnaround plan must include, but is not limited to, the following measurable, annual goals:

1. Student attendance, dismissal, and exclusion rates;
2. Student safety and discipline;
3. Student promotion, graduation, and dropout rates;

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<sup>D</sup> Chapter 70 is Massachusetts' education funding formula for "ensuring adequate and equitable K-12 education funding". Unlike Connecticut, which uses the Minimum Budget Requirement, Massachusetts's funding formula establishes a minimum local contribution amount for each town based on that town's property and income wealth data.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2018). *School Finance: Chapter 70 Program*. Malden, MA: Author. Available from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/fy2019/whitepaper.html>.

4. Student achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System;
5. Progress in areas of academic underperformance;
6. Progress among subgroups of students including low-income students, limited English-proficient students, and students receiving special education services;
7. Reduction of achievement gaps among different groups of students;
8. Student acquisition and mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills;
9. Development of college readiness, including at the elementary and middle school levels;
10. Parent and family engagement;
11. Building a culture of academic success among students;
12. Building a culture of student support and success among faculty and staff; and
13. Developmentally appropriate child assessments from prekindergarten through third grade, if applicable.<sup>18</sup>

The turnaround plan is authorized for up to three years and may be updated annually. The commissioner and receiver must submit quarterly written reports to the school committee regarding the progress made toward turnaround goals, but the school committee does not have oversight powers or other authority of any kind during receivership. The receiver is accountable only to the commissioner, who has sole authority to supervise the progress of the receiver under the turnaround plan and to evaluate the performance of the receiver.<sup>19</sup>

The commissioner may approve modifications and amendments to the turnaround plan as necessary. After the 3-year period of receivership is complete, the BESE reevaluates the district's Level 5 status, and must adopt regulations providing for the removal of the Level 5 designation and the transfer of the operation of the district to the superintendent and school committee, based on the improvement of the district. The regulations must allow for a district to retain measures adopted under the turnaround plan for a transitional period if the commissioner determines these measures will contribute to the continued improvement of the school district. If the district has not improved sufficiently to remove the chronically underperforming designation, the commissioner may jointly determine subsequent annual goals with the receiver and renew the turnaround plan for an additional three years or create a new turnaround plan.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Powers of the Receiver***

The receiver reports directly to the commissioner of the DESE and is granted the full powers of both the superintendent and the local school committee, under statute. Additionally, the following powers are enumerated in statute:

1. Expand, alter, or replace the curriculum and program offerings of the district or of a school in the district;
2. Reallocate the uses of the existing budget of the district;
3. Provide funds, subject to appropriation, to increase the salary of an administrator or teacher in the district working in a chronically underperforming school in order to retain and attract highly-qualified staff, or to reward administrators or teachers who achieve the annual goals set forth in the turnaround plan;
4. Expand the school day, school year, or both for all schools in the district;

5. Limit, suspend, or change one or more provisions of any contract or collective bargaining agreement in the district, except the compensation of teachers and administrators may not be reduced without a commensurate reduction in hours;
6. Add prekindergarten or full-day kindergarten classes;
7. Require all administrators, principals, and teachers in the district to reapply for their positions, with full discretion granted to the receiver to accept or reject the reapplications;
8. Limit, suspend, or change one or more district policies or practices, as such policies relate to underperforming schools in the district;
9. Include a provision of job-embedded professional development for teachers in the district, with an emphasis on strategies that involve teacher feedback and input;
10. Provide for increased opportunities for teacher planning time and collaboration, focused on improving student instruction;
11. Establish a plan for professional development of administrators in the district, with an emphasis on strategies that develop leadership skills, and use the principles of distributed leadership;
12. Establish steps to assure a continuum of high expertise by aligning the following processes with the common core of professional knowledge and skill:
  - Hiring
  - Induction
  - Teacher evaluation
  - Professional development
  - Teacher advancement
  - School culture
  - Organizational structure;
13. Develop a strategy to search for and study best practices in areas of demonstrated deficiency in the district;
14. Establish strategies to address mobility and transiency among the student population of the district;
15. Include additional components, at the discretion of the commissioner and the receiver, based on the reasons the district was designated as chronically underperforming and based on the recommendations of the local stakeholder group.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Statutory Provisions Related to Teachers' Employment and Collective Bargaining Agreements***

Teachers who are not rehired, or who do not reapply for their positions, retain their rights to preferential hiring within the district for other positions, but they do not have the right to displace any teacher with professional status during the school year. Tenured teachers may be dismissed by the receiver for good cause, with five days written notice, which includes an explanation of why the receiver is not retaining that teacher. Teachers who are terminated may seek a review of the decision within five days of receiving notice of termination through expedited arbitration. The commissioner must appoint an arbiter within three days of receipt of the teacher's petition. The arbiter must conduct a hearing and make a decision within 10 days of the receipt of the petition. This means the entire arbitration process can take no more than 18 days from the date the teacher is notified of termination.<sup>22</sup>

The receiver and commissioner may alter the compensation, hours, and working conditions of administrators, principals, teachers, and staff by altering the provisions of contracts and collective bargaining agreements, if the commissioner considers it necessary to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students. This is accomplished by reopening the contract or agreement for up to 30 days of negotiation with the union. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement within this time, or if the agreement is not ratified by union members within 10 days, the parties submit the remaining unresolved issues to a joint resolution committee for dispute resolution. The joint committee is comprised of one representative of the collective bargaining entity, one member appointed by the school committee, and one independent arbiter. The joint committee has 10 days to agree to a resolution. The committee must consider the positions of the parties, the designation of the school or district as underperforming or chronically underperforming, and the needs of students. If the joint committee does not come to an agreement within 10 days, the commissioner is empowered to resolve all outstanding issues.<sup>23</sup>

There are currently three Massachusetts districts in receivership: Lawrence, Southbridge, and Holyoke, with Lawrence in the process of transitioning back to the control of the superintendent and school committee. Each receiver has taken a different approach to developing turnaround plans, but it does not appear that in any case the receiver has used all the statutory powers allowed in a given district. None of the initial receivers assigned to each district have asked all teachers or administrators to reapply for their jobs.<sup>24</sup> However, levels of community resistance to entering receivership has differed between communities.

### **Lawrence Receivership Case Study**

Lawrence, Massachusetts was the first school district identified as Level 5 and was entered into state receivership in 2012. The district was assigned Jeffrey Riley, a school administrator from Boston, as receiver. As receiver, Riley was given broad powers over all district operations.<sup>25</sup> According to Beth Schueler, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, the turnaround plan Riley implemented had five key components: 1) an effort to create a culture of high expectations with aggressive performance goals; 2) increased school-level accountability and autonomy; 3) a focus on improving the effectiveness of school and central office staff through replacement and development; 4) expanded learning time; and 5) a focus on increasing the use of data for instructional improvement.<sup>26</sup>

Specifically, Riley undertook the following actions under the Lawrence turnaround plan:

- Developed an ambitious turnaround plan and performance goals for the district.
- Reduced central office spending by \$7.6 million in two years and shifted the funds to the school-level.
- Provided differentiated supports for schools based on their academic performance and capacity. The highest-performing schools in the district were granted broad autonomy, while the lowest-performing schools were turned over to independent education management organizations, which were then provided substantial autonomy. The middle-performing schools were supported primarily by central office.

- Replaced 56 percent of principals over two years.
- Did not require all teachers to reapply for their jobs but removed about eight percent of the teaching force.
- Replaced the traditional pay scale with a performance-based career ladder system.
- Created leadership opportunities for teachers.
- Gave a pay increase to 100 percent of teachers.
- Increased learning time by expanding the school day and adding extracurricular activities.
- Implemented Acceleration Academies during week-long breaks for students identified as needing remediation.
- Provided training in how to use data to drive instruction.<sup>27</sup>

Riley has been applauded for taking a measured approach to implementing reforms in Lawrence. He did not require all teachers and administrators to reapply for their jobs, he gathered considerable community input into the turnaround plan, and he enlisted local nonprofits to provide enrichment activities for students, rather than contracting with outside entities. These actions are credited with developing community support for the receivership process.<sup>28</sup>

Early results indicate Lawrence's receivership resulted in large and significant improvements in mathematics achievement scores and smaller improvements in reading scores. However, it also appears much of the academic improvement was gained through what were called Acceleration Academies, which provided intensive, evidence-based instruction in math and reading to students during school vacations. Each week-long academy provided an additional 30 hours or more of individualized, intensive instruction to students struggling in core subjects, leading to questions about whether this particular intervention was more powerful than the larger, more politically disruptive reforms allowed under statute.<sup>29</sup> However, more recent results indicate additional positive outcomes. The graduation rate in Lawrence has risen to 71.7 percent for the 2016-17 school year,<sup>30</sup> an increase of 19.4 percentage points since the district entered receivership.<sup>31</sup> And, 10 schools in the district have been designated Level 1 schools (the highest designation under the previous accountability framework), up from two in 2012.<sup>32</sup>

## Authority of the Connecticut State Department of Education to Intervene in Low-Performing School Districts

### **Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Plan Under ESSA**

Under Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Plan, also designed to meet the state's requirements under ESSA, there are five performance tiers for schools. The lowest two tiers are Turnaround Schools and Focus Schools, which are identified every three years. Turnaround schools are the equivalent of schools in need of comprehensive support under ESSA.<sup>33</sup> The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) will identify the approximately 40 schools with the lowest overall performance in the state as Turnaround Schools.<sup>34</sup> The CSDE will also identify approximately 20 schools with at least one consistently underperforming student subgroup as Focus Schools.<sup>35</sup> Focus Schools are the equivalent of schools in need of targeted support under ESSA.<sup>36</sup> Under

Connecticut's ESSA plan, the CSDE will provide differentiated technical assistance and supports on evidence-based best practices to Turnaround Schools, Focus Schools, and the districts that oversee these schools, so the districts and schools "will create the necessary systems that will improve student outcomes."<sup>37</sup>

For school districts receiving Title I funds, Connecticut's ESSA plan outlines three accountability tiers at the district-level. Tier I districts are those Title I districts determined to be performing adequately and will have the greatest autonomy offered under ESSA, while maintaining accountability for continuous improvement.<sup>38</sup> Tier II districts are 20 of the 30 lowest-performing districts in the state, which are also known as Alliance Districts. Connecticut state statute requires Alliance Districts to submit annual district improvement plans in order to receive additional state funding. If these districts do not achieve the targets set out in the plans, the required submission frequency increases. If, after three years, the district does not improve, the CSDE will require districts to implement specific evidence-based interventions and will direct improvement plan revisions. The CSDE also "considers elimination" of competitive school improvement grant opportunities.<sup>39</sup>

The 10 lowest-performing school districts in the state, now called Opportunity Districts, are responsible for all Alliance District requirements, but are also subject to additional supports and interventions by the CSDE, including the assignment of a cross-divisional support team and mandatory trainings. If the district does not meet its targets after one year, the CSDE will perform an in-depth program review. If the district does not meet its targets after two years, it is subject to a state-directed needs assessment and the CSDE will direct which evidence-based interventions and supports the district will implement under its improvement plan.<sup>40</sup>

If the district does not meet its targets after three years of intensive supports, Turnaround and Focus schools in the district will enter the state "Structured Decision-Making Pathway." This process includes, but is not limited to:

1. The reconstitution of schools
  - a. Such that the district retains management of the school but reorganizes or re-staffs the school;
  - b. The district retains authority but enters into a management partnership with an external entity; or
  - c. The district transfers the entire management and oversight of the school to an external entity.
2. The consolidation or closure of schools
3. The restructuring of the School Governance Council
4. The restructuring of School Board Governance

### **Statutory Authority for the State to Intervene in Low-Performing Districts**

The CSDE's authority to require Tier III district restructuring of Turnaround and/or Focus schools is derived from Connecticut state statute, which allows the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBOE) to intervene in low-performing schools and districts.

Specifically, the SBOE may:

1. Require an operations or instructional audit to identify programmatic savings or deficits in curriculum and instruction;

2. Require districts to use state or federal funds for critical needs as directed by the SBOE;
3. Provide incentives to attract highly-qualified teachers and principals;
4. Direct the transfer and assignment of teachers and principals;
5. Require additional training and technical assistance for parents, guardians, teachers, principals, and central office staff members;
6. Require the district to implement a model curriculum;
7. Identify schools for reconstitution as state or local charter schools, innovation schools, CommPACT schools, schools based on other models for school improvement, or for management by an entity other than the local or regional board of education;
8. Direct the local or regional board of education for the district to develop and implement a plan addressing deficits in achievement as recommended in the instructional audit;
9. Assign a technical assistance team to the school or district to guide school or district initiatives;
10. Establish instructional and learning benchmarks for the school or district;
11. Provide funding to any proximate district so students in a low-performing district may attend school in a neighboring district;
12. Direct the establishment of learning academies within schools;
13. Require the local or regional board of education to undergo training and submit an annual action plan to the commissioner of the CSDE;
14. Require the appointment of a superintendent approved by the commissioner of the CSDE or a district improvement officer, selected by the commissioner.<sup>41</sup>

If the district fails to make progress after two years, the SBOE may request the Connecticut General Assembly enact legislation authorizing control of the district be reassigned to the SBOE or other authorized entity, or grant the commissioner of the CSDE the authority to reconstitute the local or regional board of education.<sup>42</sup> If the SBOE elects to allow the commissioner to reconstitute a board of education, the following requirements apply:

1. The local or regional board of education may be under state control for not more than five years;
2. The local or regional board of education must have completed training regarding the proper roles and different functions of the board of education;
3. The commissioner will terminate the existing board of education and appoint members of a new board of education with terms of three years, with the opportunity to reappoint for a second term of two years.<sup>43</sup>

### **Commissioner's Network Schools**

The commissioner of the CSDE is also granted the authority to select up to 25 low-performing schools to be included in a program called the Commissioner's Network, which provides additional funding and support from the CSDE. Schools are given preference if they: volunteer to participate, will have an expired collective bargaining agreement for the year the turnaround plan is to be implemented, are located in districts that have experience with turnaround reform, or have previously received a federal School Improvement Grant. Commissioner's Network schools are subject to an operations and instructional audit by the CSDE, after which the commissioner and a

turnaround committee — made up of teachers, administrators, parents, and the commissioner — develop a turnaround plan for the school.<sup>44</sup> The turnaround committee may select one of the following turnaround models for school improvement:

1. A CommPACT school;
2. A social development model;
3. The management, governance, or administration of the school to be the responsibility of a Regional Education Service Center, institution of higher education, or an approved educational management organization;
4. A school reorganization model including small learning academies;
5. A model developed by the turnaround committee that includes best practices used at other schools;
6. A community school; or
7. A model developed by, or in consultation with the commissioner of the CSDE.<sup>45</sup>

If the turnaround committee does not develop a sufficient turnaround plan, as determined by the commissioner, the commissioner may develop a turnaround plan for the school independent of the turnaround committee.<sup>46</sup> The turnaround plan may include the following proposals:

1. Changing the hours and schedules of teachers and administrators in the school;
2. Changing the length and schedule of the school day or school year;
3. Changing the amount of time teachers shall be present in school beyond the regular school day; and/or
4. The hiring or reassignment of teachers and administrators at the school.<sup>47</sup>

### **District Improvement Officers**

Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 170, § 10-233e(e)(2) allows the SBOE to assign a district improvement officer to low-performing school districts, “whose authority is consistent with Section 138 of Public Act 11-61.”<sup>48</sup> Section 138 of Public Act 11-61 has not been codified, as it related to the time-limited engagement of a “special master” in the town of Windham, whose term has concluded. However, the authority of such a special master appears to still be in effect if the SBOE chooses to assign a district improvement officer. The special master is to work collaboratively with the local board of education and superintendent of schools to implement the provisions of the district improvement plan, and is required to manage and allocate any federal state and local education funds. Additionally, the special master is required to report regularly to the SBOE on the progress of implementing the improvement plan, as well as the effectiveness of the local board of education and district superintendent. The SBOE, through the special master, has expanded ability to renegotiate collective bargaining agreements in the school district through an expedited arbitration process set out in the act. The final arbiter of the contract negotiation is required to “give the highest priority to the educational interests of the state,” and their decision is binding.<sup>49</sup>

## Endnotes

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