

Successful School Turnarounds: Seven Steps for District Leaders

Developed for

**The Center for Comprehensive
School Reform and Improvement**

by

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What is a “Turnaround”?

Quick

Dramatic

Sustained

Change in Performance

Brought about by a
Highly-Capable Leader and Staff

Seven Steps for District Leaders

- #1:** Commit to Success
- #2:** Choose Turnarounds for the Right Schools
- #3:** Develop a Pipeline of Turnaround Leaders
- #4:** Give Leaders the “Big Yes”
- #5:** Hold Leaders Accountable for Results
- #6:** Prioritize Teacher Hiring
- #7:** Proactively Engage the Community

#1: Commit to Success

Turnarounds are one of the only proven ways to quickly fix a failing organization

The diagram features a central blue rounded rectangle at the bottom containing the text "Stay the course even when some first attempts are unsuccessful". Two green circles are positioned above it. The left circle contains the text "Turnarounds are one of the only proven ways to quickly fix a failing organization". The right circle contains the text "They can be very difficult and controversial". Two light green arrows point from the bottom of each green circle towards the top of the blue rectangle. A dashed green line connects the left green circle to a separate rounded rectangle on the left side of the slide.

They can be very difficult and controversial

Other dramatic changes include starting fresh with a new leader and staff and closing the school and dispersing students to higher-performing schools

Stay the course even when some first attempts are unsuccessful



#2: Choose Turnarounds for the Right Schools

Which schools
require
dramatic
change?

- Student performance is extremely and chronically low
- Incremental efforts have been tried and failed

Consider...

- Supply of turnaround leaders
- District oversight context



#3: Develop a Pipeline of Turnaround Leaders

Engage in
targeted

Recruitment

Training

Selection

Placement



Build a pool of
leaders with

Specific
turnaround
competencies

Ability to engage
in consistent set
of actions

Turnaround Competencies

Driving for Results

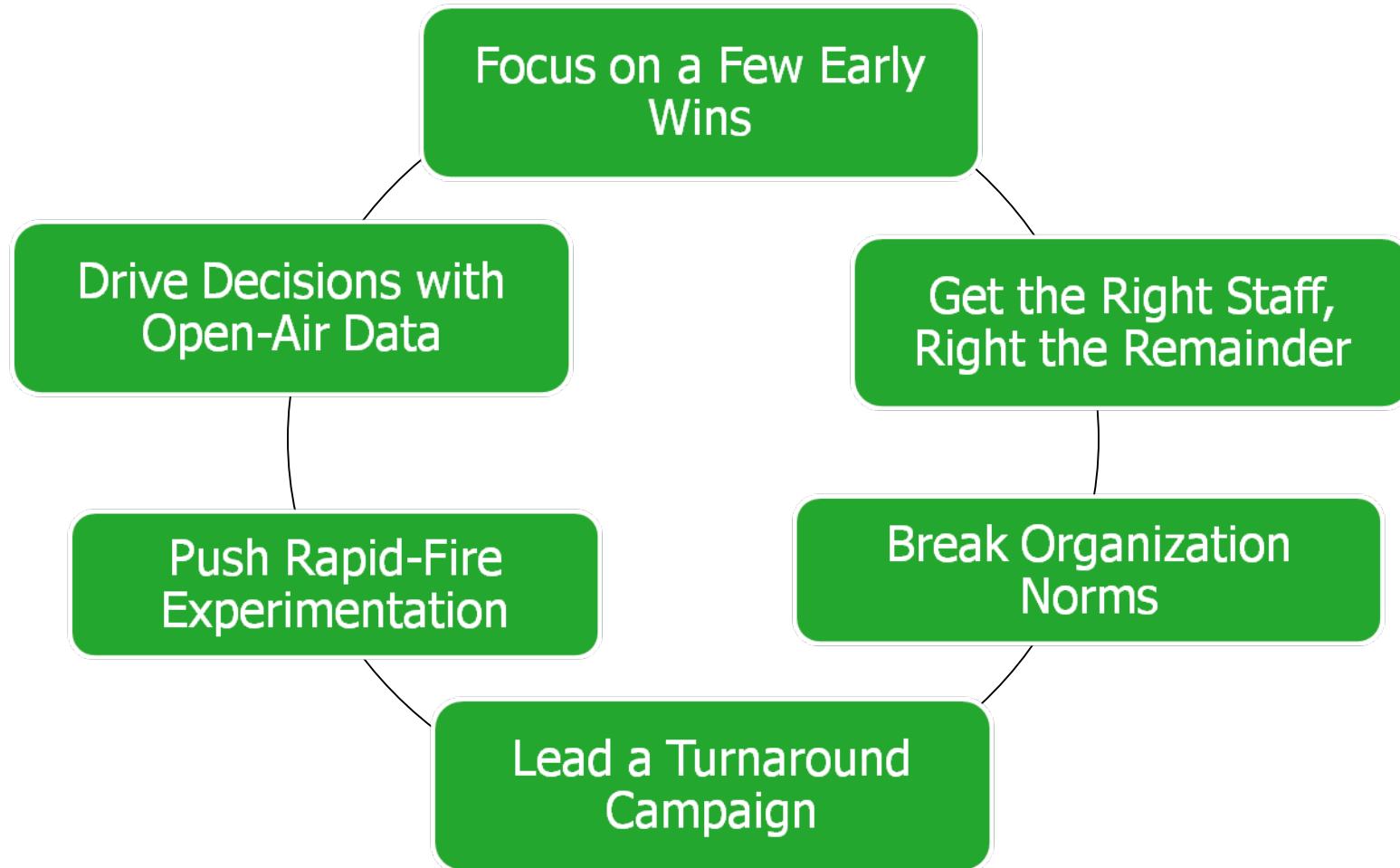
Influencing for Results

Problem Solving

Showing Confidence to Lead

Source: Public Impact (2008). *School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success*.

Turnaround Leader Actions



Source: Hassel, E.A. & Hassel, B.C. (2009). The Big U-Turn: How to Bring Schools from the Brink of Failure to Stellar Success. *Education Next*



#4: Give Leaders the “Big Yes”

Staffing Autonomy

- Authority over hiring and dismissal
- Waivers from tenure and seniority protections

Operational Autonomies

- Scheduling
- Budget decisions
- Programs and professional development



#5: Hold Leaders Accountable for Results



Short timeline for results



Ongoing monitoring and reporting



Rapid "retry"



#6: Prioritize Teacher Hiring in Turnaround Schools

Early recruitment

Special recruiting fairs

Performance incentives

Pool of qualified replacements



#7: Proactively Engage the Community



Provide a stark look at current failure



Create a vision for the future



Publicize early wins

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Priorities for District Leaders

Build the pipeline of qualified turnaround principals

Establish structures to accommodate turnaround schools

Use turnarounds as part of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate chronic low-performance

Selected Resources

- *Successful School Turnarounds: Seven Steps for District Leaders* (CCSRI 2009)
- *The Turnaround Challenge: Why America's Best Opportunity to Improve Student Achievement Lies in Our Worst-Performing Schools* (Calkins et al 2007)
- *The Big U-Turn: How to Bring Schools from the Brink of Failure to Stellar Success* (Hassel & Hassel, 2009)
- *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools: A Practice Guide* (IES 2008)
- *Try, Try Again: How to Triple the Number of Fixed Failing Schools Without Getting Any Better at Fixing Schools* (Public Impact 2009)
- *School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success* (Public Impact 2008)



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