

The State Board of Education Recommendations to the State Superintendent of Education on State Support and Intervention for Low Performing Schools

The State Board of Education developed the following policy recommendations for the State Superintendent of Education with respect to state support and intervention for chronically low- performing schools:

1. The SBOE strongly recommends transparency and strong, meaningful, and constant involvement and input from parents, students, teachers, administrators and community partners. This process must be robust, as is required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Moreover, research and experience from other states shows that family, teacher and community involvement and support is key to successful turnarounds, and the State has a duty and authority to ensure their input from the earliest stages of developing restructuring plans.
2. The SBOE recommends that all proposed restructuring plans be based on complete sufficient, and accurate data that show how the plan will improve low-performing schools; plans should include interim goals and benchmarks, follow guidelines established by the State, and target those grades and groups of students that have shown the least amount of academic progress on annual state accountability assessments.
3. The SBOE recommends encouraging Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to include alternative assessments and innovative benchmarks that could reveal improvement in such key indicators as tardiness, school climate, truancy, and dropout rates, as well as progress for groups of students from Below Basic to Basic, from Basic to Proficient and Proficient to Advanced.
4. The SBOE recommends that the State Superintendent consider all five options under No Child Left Behind, and strongly supports tailoring specific turnaround plans to each of the schools slated for restructuring. The State Board suggests these plans be formulated with the individual school administration, stakeholders, parents and community members, and a business plan drawn up to bring schools out of the restructuring classification within two years.

The State Board recommends that the Superintendent develop policy and program options to assist in the adoption of any of the five options available under the No Child Left Behind legislation. The specific option related recommendations are as follows:

Option One: Charter School Conversions

Should this option be chosen, the Board recommends that the Superintendent receive a clear action plan with options for parents who may chose to enroll their children elsewhere.

Option Two – Reconstitution by Replacing All or Most Staff

If this strategy is employed, the Board recommends that the Superintendent make sure the plan is coupled with other forms of district support. Merely replacing the principal is insufficient. Successful turnaround schools have shared school leadership—teachers, parents, outside community leaders as well as a seasoned, effective principal.

Option Three- Contracting with an Outside Entity (Education Management Organization)

If this option is chosen, the Board recommends that the Superintendent ensure that the Educational Management Organization has a proven track record of success in turning around schools and improving the academic achievement of low-income students. Moreover, the Superintendent should ensure that the LEAs develop clear, interim benchmarks and closely monitor progress toward those goals.

Option Four – State Takeover

Given the District of Columbia's unique status as a city-state, this option makes sense only in cases where a chronically low-performing school either presents an inadequate restructuring plan or fails to implement it. It remains an important option in ensuring the main goal, which is raising student achievement.

Option Five – Other

The State Board of Education realizes that, nationally, most schools facing restructuring have utilized this option, which allows schools and districts the greatest flexibility. Schools that are on an upward path could continue doing what's working. Others can tailor restructuring plans from a variety of research-proven techniques and strategies. This might include combining two under-enrolled schools; creating K-12 clusters; creating schools within schools: instituting magnet programs, career clusters, and internship or apprenticeship opportunities; adding portfolio assessments; extending the school day or school year; and forging partnerships with businesses, community groups and nonprofit organizations.