



INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL TURNAROUNDS MEETING MINUTES

October 22, 2014
1:00 p.m. (EDT)

EVSC Technology Innovation Center
951 Walnut Street
Evansville, IN 47713

Board Members Present: Committee Chair Dan Elsener, Sarah O'Brien, Tony Walker.

Additionally, Special Assistant to the Governor Claire Fiddian-Green, Board Executive Director Robert Guffin, and Department Director of Outreach Leroy Robinson were present.

I. Call to Order/Meeting Minutes Approval

Mr. Elsener called the meeting to order on time.

II. Overview of Purpose of Committee

Mr. Elsener provided a brief history of the committee and its charge.

III. Public Comment

Mr. Elsener announced there was no one signed-up to for public comment. Mr. Elsener indicated the order of agenda would be modified to allow Mass Insight to present prior to Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) at their request, followed by a presentation from Public Impact.

Mr. Walker shared a comment that Glenwood Leadership Academy (GLA) did not appear to him to be a failing school. He noted great community partnerships and student and teacher engagement. He said it is everything you would want in a school, and nothing in his mind supports that being a failing school. Mr. Walker stated he leaves here changed and very impressed after seeing GLA.

V. Presentation by Mass Insight on work with EVSC

Justin Cohen, President of Mass Insight Education, began his presentation on the Lead Partner Model. His presentation can be viewed at http://www.in.gov/sboe/files/2014-10-22_MIE_School_Turnaround_Cmt.pdf. He stated it created charter-like flexibilities but really empowered the educator. He said due to the commitment to data and accountability, a new unit could be created as a lead partner. Mr. Cohen commented that where there is local leadership deeply committed to change it is possible to create a new unit. He then outlined four requirements when working with a new school district:

- 1) Accountability - formal accountability agreement for student achievement

- 2) Authority over key elements of the school
 - a. Time
 - b. Money - budget
 - c. Programming - academic decisions
- 3) Comprehensive services
- 4) Embedded presence in schools

Mr. Cohen discussed the following issues regarding lead partners:

- 1) Some external lead partners have proven successful in some school districts, they are not likely to expand outside of their existing regions.
- 2) ILPs are not an extra expense but rather a more efficient and school-centric expenditure of central office resources.
- 3) Only districts (or internal lead partners) hold the possibility of encompassing all of the competencies and experiences necessary for turnaround work.

He commented that although complex in implementation, the internal lead partner model makes sense. Mr. Cohen explained that local conditions were right for doing this kind of work and it was welcomed. He stated it is a partnership that is dependent on mutual respect and accountability. He expressed that it is impossible to do this work without that.

Ami Magunia, Engagement Manager for Mass Insight Education, added that when EVSC decided to partner with Mass Insight, it was a mutual decision. Dr. Victor Smith, Superintendent of EVSC, said, 'This is a marriage.' A lot of reasons set EVSC apart, which is why Mass Insight felt it was one of the best districts to take on this initiative. Ms. Magunia also said there has been a collaborative effort from teachers union. She said there was an invitation and an honest conversation from the beginning.

Ms. Magunia also stated that central office personnel were immediately assigned to make this a priority. Dr. Smith will discuss strategic plan of the corporation in a few minutes, but this is part of the larger plan of the corporation, she stated. She went on to mention that the Office of Transformation Schools (OTS), the district's own internal lead partner, was created. After OTS was formed, they got to work. Ms. Magunia stated part of the work done was a performance contract, accountability for student achievement, and staff recommitment to ensure teachers in those buildings were best suited for those buildings.

Mr. Elsener asked how long the recommitment process was. Ms. Magunia replied it started in January, 2014. She said there was approval and a change to school schedules, alignment of school budgets to school plans, working with OTS to find a new assistant principal, authority over budget, and people and funding in congruence with where the school should go. She said there has been accountability and support of principals. Mr. Cohen added that it is an interesting blend of mandatory policies and voluntary incentives. He said state takeover alone has not been a single strategy anywhere.

Mr. Elsener said the fact that the legislature came together to create a state intervention mechanism is very important because failing schools are struggling terribly. He added that learning about what works

best, and doing it well is a whole other issue. Mr. Cohen said it is about creating real flexibility for school districts to participate in the intervention process. Mr. Elsener responded that it is an interesting balance in that there is a need to intervene, but there must also be enough power and authority locally.

Mr. Walker asked how Mass Insight helped build capacity in the district. Ms. Magunia replied the way the capacity building works, for example, is to design the selection process for the director of the OTS; she said this is a competency based selection process. She went on to say they built the capacity and design to create the same model for principals as OTS as well.

Ms. O'Brien asked what is non-negotiable in the placement of a lead partner. Mr. Cohen answered:

- 1) It must be a top priority
- 2) There must be accountability; specifically a performance contract.
- 3) A Transformation Zone is important he said, as well as reporting directly to Superintendent. He stated a middle management structure can get deeply in the way.

Mr. Elsener inquired if there is a template for the performance contract; Mr. Cohen replied yes. Mr. Elsener then asked if the size of the district matters and Mr. Cohen answered that no district is too large in Indiana. Ms. O'Brien asked about challenges. Mr. Cohen replied that there are challenges in cases where there is reluctance to participate.

Mr. Elsener asked who is in charge of Glenwood Leadership Academy. Mr. Cohen replied the OTS, and that Carrie Anne Hillyard, is the general contractor. Mass Insight does not have authority as a partner, OTS has authority, he stated.

Ms. Magunia added that Mass Insight is often described by clients as critical friends. She stated they interview everyone at central office and understand how all of the functions work. She stated they understand road blocks and where barriers would be and they trouble shoot with superintendent.

Mr. Cohen said Mass Insight has a team in Boston of 50 total, and a few extra contractors. He reiterated they are selective about their partners. He also said Mass Insight is deeply committed to students and results, and if we can't get them then they have to part ways.

IV. Presentation by Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation on Transformation Zone

Dr. Smith then took the podium. He created a presentation for the committee that can be viewed at http://www.in.gov/sboe/files/2014-10-22_EVSC_ILP-OTS_SLIDES.pdf. He began by saying that EVSC has a great team. He said there is a 92% poverty rate in the 5 turnaround schools in the district. Dr. Smith described the vision, mission, and values of the district and the foundational goal.

Dr. Smith said EVSC is trying not to be a district of compliance but a district of growth. The district was able to investigate how to build its capacity, he stated. He said the district had lost over six million dollars of funding and they subsequently streamlined the central office and became very lean. Dr. Smith said this resulted in a lost human capital. He stated that EVSC needed a partner that would not create an unaffordable expense. Dr. Smith said it is difficult to talk about school turnaround without talking

about district turnaround. He opined that schools cannot be improved if you are not willing to improve your district.

Ms. Hillyard then explained the Transformation Zone Mantra: unbound thinking, unlocking possibilities. Ms. Hillyard described the OTS Mission and EVSC infrastructure. This process would not work without a Superintendent supportive of turnaround and a school board who is supportive, she said. She pointed out that EVSC clustered the five turnaround schools together, but they have very different support needs. She commented that it's important to understand each school's reality, which could be changing rapidly if the building leader is promoting the change.

Ms. Hillyard then discussed alignment of school support. She said there is a gap in individualized support they are receiving, a level of intensity that is not being addressed. She said it's important to identify what the gap is.

Ms. Hillyard moved on to discuss early successes; she said early wins are critical in turnaround. She pointed out GLA's largest gains were in I-READ, McGary and Evans gains were in ELA and Math. She commented that another leading indicator is culture and climate data. She stated they have seen significant improvements in office referrals.

Mr. Elsener asked about progress goals for each year. Ms. Hillyard replied that they set a backwards goal to monitor the leading indicators and progress and that they monitor on a quarterly basis. She reiterated that goal setting is critical in this process and one of their key indicators. Mr. Elsener asked how many years it will be to get to proficiency. Ms. Hillyard responded that there are team level goals and strategies in place instead of looking at a school-wide goal. She also said they look at individual student goals.

Mr. Walker asked about other measures of growth, and Ms. Hillyard replied that they keep a pulse on leading indicators. She said they created their own dashboard. Mr. Walker then asked if there is a difference in how assessments in the Transformation Zone are administered. Ms. Hillyard replied it may give them more tools. She said a walk-through system was developed to look at culture and climate, so they outlined a new walk-through form to go along with teacher evaluation. She stated they constantly monitor what those trends are, like iPads in the classroom, and note those trends. Dr. Smith added it's the most cost efficient approach that he's seen.

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VI. Presentation by National Consultant Public Impact

Tim Field, Senior Consultant at Public Impact, presented to the committee. His presentation can be found at http://www.in.gov/sboe/files/Public_Impact_Oct_22_Presentation_to_SBOE_TA_Committee.pdf. Mr. Field highlighted promising practices from other states. He explained the focus states are Massachusetts and Virginia for building district capacity and facilitating the relationship between the district and the partner. He said in Massachusetts if after two years in level 4 and there is no improvement, the state takes over and works with the external partner directly. Mr. Field also spoke about Louisiana and Tennessee. He said those states developed turnaround districts who manage a portfolio of turnaround schools made up of charter schools and state-run schools.

Mr. Field then explained the criteria of state intervention. He said only a handful of states allow for state intervention and fewer have actually intervened. He stated that demand for state takeover is greater than capacity. He went through the following topics for the committee to consider:

- State Capacity
- District Capacity and reform strategy
- Charter Growth Plans
- Quality and quantity of external partners
- Relative Need

He stated that Massachusetts' theory of change revolves around building district capacity, and that Evansville is a great example of having a capable district.

Mr. Field then talked about selecting an improvement model. He pointed out that one question concerns governance and where the turnaround school should live; he said the issue is whether the school should be inside or outside of the district.

Mr. Field explained Massachusetts goes beyond picking a partner, they look at what conditions can be put in place to catapult change. They look at whether new contracts could be put in place. Legislation in Massachusetts allows the state waive parts of collective bargaining, he said. Mr. Field commented that unlike Indiana, employees are still district employees, but the state allows the kind of freedom such as in Evansville.

Mr. Elsener asked if it's possible to turn around systems, processes, and cultures. Mr. Field replied that selecting the appropriate improvement model can make that possible, and that Tennessee did take this step. Tennessee has innovation zones he said, and has made some steps for districts to manage turnarounds internally.

Mr. Field continued by describing the process of selecting external partners, engaging communities such as the example of Louisiana and delineating roles and responsibilities. Virginia needed to get more involved and have more oversight, he said. He stated in Massachusetts, even with very clear memorandums of understanding ("MOUS"), however, external partners tended to acquiesce to the district when there were disagreements over autonomies.

Mr. Walker asked why Massachusetts had these disagreements. Mr. Field replied that the state wants to see MOUs in place to ensure external partners have authority to do the work, but there are real challenges; for example, in moving staff out of the building. He said the state needs to be present to monitor what is and is not taking place. Mr. Field said one of the things both Massachusetts and Virginia do is they have their own set of turnaround principles.

Ms. O'Brien asked how it could be set-up to create a positive lead partner experience. Mr. Field said understand the needs of a particular school and vendor is important. Also, he pointed out, alignment is important. He said one of the challenges is a lack of commitment from the district to provide autonomy to do the work. He said a tough question that arises is to what extent are the services going to be sustained beyond the life of a one-year contract; what will be the plan for sustainability, he said.

Mr. Field continued by stating that there are states that have turnaround districts; specifically, New Jersey and Massachusetts. Mr. Field pointed out that if there is a theory of change that a district is not willing to accept, there will not be positive change within a single school.

Mr. Field then made a few comments about goal setting. He opined that it is very important that goals are included for all of the objectives of the turnaround. He gave examples of focusing student performance goals on growth, establishing interim multi-year goals, and reflecting the areas in which the external partner has control.

Mr. Elsener thanked Mr. Field for his presentation.

VII. Facilitated Committee Discussion: Lead Partner Recommendation for November 5th

Mr. Elsener said the students and these communities don't have time to waste. He posed the questions of how do you implement a spirited approach, and what is the backup plan if the relationship is now like a marriage. Mr. Elsener asked staff to look at how intervention affects finances, facilities, enrollment, and communities. He stated we can create a lot of motivation for people to cooperate. He said the situation right now is not tenable to move forward. Mr. Elsener expressed the importance of knowing who is in charge, who do they report to. He said we have often seen the problem of too many chefs in the kitchen, which makes things unclear.

Ms. O'Brien recommended looking at a tiered approach. This would mean looking at voluntary partnerships at a certain level and how that would be integrated in an Indiana model, she said. Ms. O'Brien asked if all the year 4 quality reviews had been done, and Mr. Guffin responded they have been done. He stated that 2 weeks ago Board staff received a notice from Department that they were being sent out, but that staff does not know to whom.

Mr. Walker said while he is undecided about the IPS proposals for lead partners, he thinks the Board needs to be in there. The Board should be signatory to an MOU to define the scope of work, he said. Ms. Fiddian-Green asked what is needed to make a decision for IPS lead partner. Mr. Walker said being part of the negotiation and then having an enforcement mechanism that can be utilized.

Mr. Elsener added that he said he has noticed a very different tone from when turnaround started in Indiana. He said if the district is not present for these discussions about how to make the relationship work, lead partners will not get results. He said there are a lot of issues that needed to be looked into, like much time will a lead partner will be given to show results. He said we are going to have to have a clear decision on Arlington as well. Ms. O'Brien said regarding the other arrangements there were some legal issues as well. Mr. Elsener stated let's be aggressive. He said let's get the best support for a legal theory and interpretation.

VIII. Next Meeting November 17, 2014, Indianapolis

The committee confirmed the next meeting date of November 17.

IX. Adjourn

Mr. Walker moved to adjourn and Mr. Elsener adjourned the meeting with no objections.