



Illinois State Board of Education

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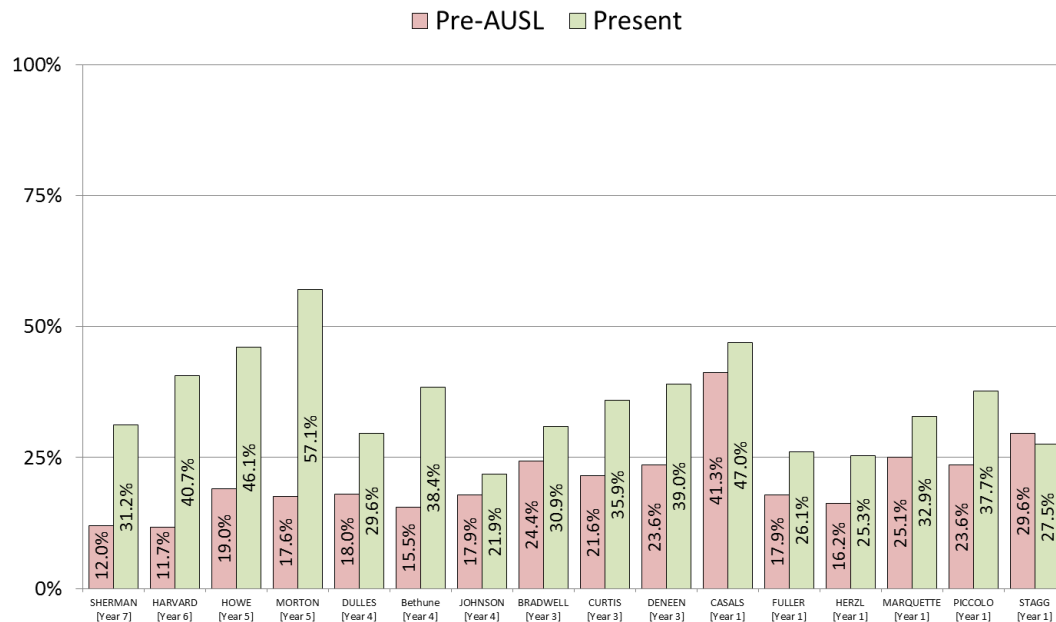
Abstract

Target Audience

With 22 turnaround schools in Chicago, AUSL is the largest manager of restart schools in the country. Our work is primarily in Chicago, but we have served as a lead partner for the SIG-funded transformation work at North Chicago High School. We would consider partnering with other SIG-eligible schools/districts, particularly those within an hour's drive of Chicago. Our experience is K-12.

Evidence of Effectiveness

Student achievement growth on the ISAT composite meets/exceeds at AUSL turnaround elementary schools has outpaced Chicago Public Schools' district growth every year since 2008. The table below compares the composite ISAT meets/exceeds prior to AUSL intervention with the data from 2012-13. The schools on the left side have been under AUSL management the longest, whereas the schools on the right side are the newest to join the AUSL network. As the table indicates, schools have made great strides under AUSL management, and this has been independently verified in research conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago. In a study published in 2012, researchers found that four years after intervention, reformed elementary schools closed the gap to the CPS system average by almost half in reading and two-thirds in math. (AUSL schools represent 50% of the sample used in the study, see <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/turning-around-low-performing-schools-chicago-summary-report>.)



Pre-intervention / Needs Assessment

AUSL would conduct a thorough analysis of a prospective SIG school partner using our Collegial Visit protocol as a guide.

Collegial Visits are immersive school visits, followed by immediate feedback offered in a collegial and constructive way in order to inform school improvement efforts. At the beginning of the visit, the AUSL team meets with school leadership briefly to discuss the schedule, and then the team circulates throughout the school conducting observations and taking notes. The team will examine everything from school entry to hallway and classroom environment to instructional practice and social interaction. They will also request (in advance of the visit) to conduct brief individual interviews of a cross-section of school faculty and staff and, if possible, a focus group of students.

Prior to the visit, we request that the following information be provided to the visiting team.

- A brief, written principal reflection (we will provide the template for this)
- Current staff organization chart and map/sketch of the school (w/room numbers and other pertinent locations)
- Achievement data, as well as attendance, enrollment, tardies, misconducts (current and up to three years prior as available)

Unlike most organizations that engage in this type of consulting work, AUSL has the added perspective of being school managers which informs our lens, shapes our feedback, and enables us to assist with the complex reality of implementation.

General Description of Supports Provided

Building on research and publications from Mass Insight and others including Robert Marzano, Doug Lemov, Charlotte Danielson, Lee Cantor, and The Bridgespan Group as well as from our

own experience, AUSL has codified the key components of our work to provide a “roadmap” for school transformation. Our PASSAGE framework summarizes and makes memorable the features that uniquely characterize an AUSL school, and we use this framework as our model for school improvement (see below).

PASSAGE: AUSL’s Unique Approach to Developing High-Performing Schools



Key Elements

P ositive School Culture	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Safe and orderly school and classroom environment ② Effective recruitment, attendance and discipline policies
A ction Against Adversity	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Engaged parents and community partners ② Proactive social supports that meet student needs
S etting Goals and Getting it Done	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Aggressive, transparent goals for schools, teams, and individuals ② Performance management systems with cycles of inquiry
S hared Responsibility for A chievement	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Strong leadership with high-functioning teams ② Relentless efforts to recruit, retain, and motivate high-quality staff
G uaranteed and Viable Curriculum	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Standards-based, college prep K-12 curriculum ② Aligned assessment system that identifies student academic needs
E ngaging and Personalized Instruction	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Focused professional development that ensures teacher effectiveness ② Deliberate use of Danielson framework and Signature Strategies

Instructional reform, including assessment, curriculum and instruction

In Chicago, AUSL schools use a rigorous, standards-based curriculum, with frequent formative and summative assessments. AUSL’s K-12 Alignment team leads our coaches and teachers to develop common, network-wide standards-based pacing guides, assessment tools, and assessment calendars. Teachers in all AUSL schools receive training and coaching support to use the network’s resources (coaches, data, etc.) to ensure that their planning and instruction are informed by standards and by frequent feedback about progress of each student.

Instructional and Leadership Coaching

To supplement and support school-based staff, AUSL employs a team of talented former teachers to serve as full-time coaches in Turnaround schools. In AUSL schools, the typical allocation for a 500-student elementary school would be two full-time coaches, who are hired prior to the school’s re-opening. A school’s AUSL coaches observe and coach all teachers, with particular emphasis on providing induction support to newer teachers. Coaches report to AUSL’s coach team co-managers, not to the school’s principal. Our Directors of Student Achievement and Managing Directors serve as leadership coaches to principals.

Program Management / Progress Monitoring and Data Driven Decision Making

A cornerstone of AUSL's performance management approach is the Data Dialogue, which is a discussion involving a school's administrative leadership team plus the AUSL Director responsible for the school. These meetings are held at least three times per year. Before each meeting, AUSL's Performance Management team creates a report of the school's performance on a number of indicators, including student achievement, student and teacher attendance, disciplinary incidents, and school culture and climate. During the meeting, the Managing Director and school leaders review and commit to action plans for improving performance. These conversations establish the agenda for continuous improvement and adjustments to the school's plans, and monitor progress.

Community and Family Engagement

AUSL has accumulated experience engaging with parents and the local community through its management of Chicago public schools located in various communities in the south and west sides of Chicago. In all of our experiences, initial objections by parents and community members to the turnaround of their school did not persist long after the new school opened. Parents from each of these communities have volunteered to speak in public about their appreciation of what the new Turnaround school has meant for them and for their children, and these testimonials have been helpful in forums with parents of prospective new Turnaround schools. In the course of engaging the community in a new district, AUSL would expect to bring some of these voices from Chicago to key share their experiences with non-Chicago community audiences, if the district thinks this would be helpful.

A school's principal has a key leadership role to play in engaging the community, and AUSL puts the principal of new Turnaround schools in front of community and parent audiences as soon as the school's turnaround is approved. AUSL also supports its newly designated principals by providing an AUSL staff member who can introduce and coordinate the principal's interactions with the community. This person is responsible for identifying and building relationships with individuals in the community who can influence the community's view of AUSL and school leadership, and/or who can help the school's principal make connections in the local neighborhood to better support the needs of the children and youth who attend the school. Examples of helpful connections to make: school's parent organization leaders, leaders of local businesses, management of retail/food service establishments in the vicinity of the school, pastors, leaders of community-based organizations, social service organization offices, elected officials, and law enforcement personnel.

AUSL also works closely with district central office communications and community relations staff, communicating very frequently at critical points in the calendar to coordinate public announcements about Turnaround schools. For example, in a new district, AUSL would work with local school district staff to plan for the announcement of a new Turnaround school, strategize about who would attend public hearings and meetings, etc.

School Climate and Culture

In our model, every adult who will work in a turnaround school attends three to four weeks of summer PD with their new colleagues before the school re-opens, which allows for the creation of a new and cohesive school team. This sets the foundation for building a positive school

culture. We also build in a week of all-staff summer PD between years one and two in a turnaround, allowing additional time for teacher skill-building, grade level and school-wide analysis of the prior year's data, and joint planning.

AUSL uses clear, highly detailed checklists for how network schools and classrooms should look, and clarity on key policies, processes, and routines (e.g., entry/exit procedures, uniforms, silent and orderly lines in the hallways during class transitions, etc.). To ensure accountability, AUSL's central office team conducts a fall and spring "audits" of every school providing feedback to principals, and principals visit every classroom to provide feedback to teachers, regarding whether network expectations are being met. We also encourage our school leaders to create hallway banners and bulletin board displays to communicate expectations, build school spirit, and celebrate success. Beginning with summer professional development, teachers and all school staff are expected to be consistent, positive, and respectful with students, and to expect such behavior in return.

Action Against Adversity is part of AUSL's framework because the poorest-performing schools are almost always in high-poverty, high-mobility communities. As part of the vision for the turnaround, leaders must embrace the need for the school to provide and to coordinate the extra supports that poor and sometimes homeless children need, such as:

- Well-organized, non-bureaucratic procedures for welcoming and quickly enrolling new students throughout the school year
- School uniform policy, including a supply of "loaner" uniforms so kids who show up without theirs will not miss school time
- Supplemental services from nearby social service providers
- Donated school supplies

In addition, we know that in high-poverty, high-mobility communities, all too often, facilities have been neglected. Turnaround school buildings must signal high expectations to students and families by being safe, in compliance with codes, clean, in good repair, and adequately equipped.

Strategies for Post-grant Sustainability

We believe in building local capacity to support school improvement. This includes bringing partners to see our work on the ground in Chicago, modeling professional development and instructional practices using a gradual release strategy, sharing tools and resources we've developed over the past decade, and helping schools and districts create systems and structures for sustainability.

Other Organizational Hallmarks

In addition to managing a growing network of turnaround schools, AUSL also leads the Chicago Teacher Residency (CTR), one of the first urban teacher residency programs for teacher training in the country. Since 2003, the CTR has over 650 graduates; over 80% remain in education, and more than 50% are still in AUSL schools.