

Comprehensive Instructional Reform

District and School Improvement at American Institutes for Research (AIR)

AIR's District and School Improvement Center (<http://revivingschools.org/>) provides a smart, real-world, hands-on approach to school improvement that is based on a framework grounded in research and refined by practice. Instead of implementing a one-size-fits-all program, we identify the needs specific to districts and schools and provide guidance for modifying existing programming or starting fresh. District and School Improvement Center staff believe that sustained district and school turnaround and transformation can be achieved through building capacity at all levels of the educational system and developing a strong collaborative partnership among teachers, leaders, families, and communities.

Background

Research on school turnaround indicates that schools succeeding in achieving dramatic improvement of student outcomes are more effective at integrating a concise set of initiatives (Le Floch et al., 2013). A consistent focus on instruction has been found to attribute to low-performing schools' dramatic gains (Herman et al., 2008). AIR experts work with schools to ensure program coherence that consists of “a set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and that are pursued over a sustained period” (Newman et al., 2001, p. 303).

Service Description

AIR does not propose a single curriculum or model of instructional program. Our team of experts works with schools to build on strengths to implement the right strategies to improve classroom practice. Content experts provide training for teachers on instructional techniques to enhance student learning and engagement. Our turnaround and transformation model supports the enhancement of these instruction techniques through teachers' regular collaboration in lesson planning, formative assessment design, and designing instructional interventions for students in need of extra support. We support teachers through job-embedded professional development supports, such as an turnaround coordinator to provide coaching, modeling, and support in the classroom, as well as through a process of regular and frequent peer observations. In addition, content coaches provide intense, “shoulder-to-shoulder” on-site support to dramatically improve instructional practice.

Value We Bring

In partnering with AIR, schools and districts can expect a customized, targeted approach that yields the following outcomes:

- Implementation of a coherent, disciplined approach to teaching and learning
- Identification of programs that are effective and ineffective
- A coherent curriculum in place—aligned vertically and horizontally and to state standards—and curriculum materials and technology resources embedded to meet the needs of all students, including those performing above and below proficiency
- Teachers' implementation of the curriculum with fidelity and integrity
- Daily checks for student understanding, aligned to the curriculum and state standards