

Illinois State Board of Education Innovation, Intervention, and Restructuring Task Force

**December 18, 2009
Minutes**

The second meeting of the Innovation, Intervention, and Restructuring Task Force was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Dr. Sam Redding of the Center on Innovation and Improvement. Three members of the task force were absent. A list of the task force members in attendance appears on the final page of this document. No additional guests arrived at the meeting to participate during the public participation period. Gina Burkhardt made a motion to approve the minutes from the November meeting. Her motion was seconded by Senator Pam Althoff. The minutes were approved unanimously.

The plan for the meeting was to review the draft recommendations associated with each of the legislative tasks for the task force. However, only two sections were submitted in advance of the meeting. The task force members reviewed those two sections and agreed to wait to comment on the other drafts until the next task force meeting.

The first section that the task force members discussed tackled the third legislative task about strategies related to successful turnaround efforts and a template to evaluate the success of turnaround efforts. This part of the discussion was led by Gina Burkhardt and Don Feinstein. After reviewing the literature, they defined the goal of an effective turnaround effort and outlined a series of indicators for the success of turnaround efforts for students, schools, providers, and the state. They included leading indicators for students, like attendance and engagement, which are necessary conditions to achieve the ultimate goals of improving student achievement, narrowing the achievement gap, and increasing the number of students who are prepared for college. Ms. Burkhardt pointed out that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is not currently using a set of common metrics to evaluate the success of all turnarounds in Illinois, but ISBE could use the indicators that she and Dr. Feinstein outlined to develop metrics that could be used in all turnaround schools as well as unique metrics to address specific local or school contexts. She commented that metrics should include progress benchmarks, not just for student achievement, but also for other important factors like recruiting highly qualified teachers and for capturing the bigger picture about how the culture of the school is changing. Dr. Feinstein agreed and added that there might be some metrics that should be specific to elementary schools and others that should be designed for high schools. Dr. Redding observed that in his experience with co-authoring a Practice Guide about turnarounds, the panel selected by the Institute of Education Sciences had to set a relatively low bar for their definition of a turnaround school because of the available evidence. He further commented that turnarounds are very contextual and it is difficult to generalize about best practices for all struggling schools based on successful examples that are associated with very specific local and school contexts. He encouraged the task force to include a recommendation to propose that ISBE develop a definition of turnaround success and firm metrics to measure progress in turnaround schools. A great deal of money and effort will be invested in these turnarounds over the next five years, so these efforts should be evaluated on a number of rigorous and transparent measures. He pointed out that it will also be a

challenge to outline targets for how much the school needs to improve if the turnaround effort is to be characterized as successful. Ms. Burkhardt remarked that the task force should emphasize that the starting point for the school is important and that the task force should charge ISBE with figuring out how to determine success for schools that start in different places. Dr. Redding recommended that the task force either develop a model definition and a set of metrics or offer ISBE a few options in their final recommendations.

Representative Eddy agreed that student achievement was important, but asked about measuring achievement in areas outside of math, reading, and science – the content areas for which there are currently existing state assessments. Dr. Redding and Ms. Burkhardt responded that boosting reading achievement is a critical measure because so many other assessments are essentially tests of reading comprehension. Representative Eddy agreed, but asked that increasing reading achievement be listed explicitly in the definition of turnaround success in the task force’s recommendations. He also noted that it is likely, because of the reauthorization of NCLB and the federal funding for an assessment consortium, that the state test would change during the next three years. If the assessment changes, it will not be possible to measure improvements in reading achievement in turnaround schools on the same measure over the next five years. Ms. Burkhardt and Dr. Redding agreed this was an issue, but observed that it is unlikely that the national consortium will develop and implement new standardized assessments that are linked to the common core standards before 2014. Consequently, 2010 data could serve as the baseline in Illinois and turnarounds could be judged on their performance between 2010 and 2014. Representative Eddy requested that this assumption be explicitly stated in the task force’s recommendations. The task force members agreed that improving student achievement is the ultimate goal for turnaround schools. Dr. Redding argued that the best policy would be for ISBE to set a high bar for the goals to be achieved, but then allow flexibility for schools and districts to determine the best way to meet those goals.

The task force members then discussed additional indicators that might be added to the draft. Dorland Norris agreed that attendance is an important leading indicator and suggested adding an evaluation of the professional development program to the school indicators because it is absolutely essential for teaching practices to change at these low-achieving schools. Representative Eddy also recommended that the task force include not only graduation rates as a student indicator, but also reenrollment of dropouts. He further encouraged the task force to include in the student assessment indicator, not just the state achievement test, but multiple assessment measures that can be used to show growth at the elementary and high school levels. Ms. Burkhardt agreed that the task force can add formative and benchmark assessments to the recommendation for school indicators with a qualification that those assessments meet ISBE guidelines for rigor and quality.

Dr. Redding then shifted the discussion to the fifth legislative task related to the dissemination of best practices for turnarounds that can be shared throughout the state. Dr. Redding shared his draft for this section of the report with the task force members. He recommended that ISBE collect and analyze data to examine a series of questions related to the following topics: school context and selection/implementation of an intervention; school closures and staff dismissals and reassignments; leadership and decision making; curriculum and instruction; human capital; and student support. Representative Eddy asked for clarification about the distinctions between the

turnaround and transformation models for intervention. Ms. Burkhardt commented that the main difference is that 50 percent of the staff must be replaced in the turnaround model and that the transformation model includes a number of specific strategies, such as increasing learning time.

Dr. Redding asked the task force members for comments on the draft. Ms. Burkhardt responded that it would be important to include sustainability as a category because turnaround schools will need to consider how to use unprecedented federal funding over the next few years to build capacity and develop structures that will enable their success to continue beyond this short-term funding stream. Dr. Feinstein recommended that the role and responsibility of the district also be examined because the current expectation in Illinois is that a partner organization working with the district to turn schools around phase out their involvement in year five. Representative Eddy also requested three specific changes for the draft document. First, for the first question under the school closures category, he recommended that the question should be expanded to include prompts about the higher-achieving schools in which students from closed schools enrolled and from which closed schools the higher-achieving schools received students. For the school context section, he had suggested edits for two questions. For question 6, he recommended that the question include a prompt about not just new funding, but also opportunities to reallocate existing resources. For question number 8 he asked for descriptions of the flexibilities that were implemented so best practices related to those specific flexibilities could be applied to public policy.

Ms. Burkhardt and Dr. Feinstein proposed some resources that will be necessary to support successful turnaround efforts in their draft for recommendations related to the third legislative task. However, the task force agreed to hold off on a discussion of the fourth legislative task about autonomies, resources, and supports for successful turnarounds until they discuss all of the draft sections. The task force will review each of the legislative tasks during the final meeting on December 21, 2009.

Gina Burkhardt made a motion to adjourn. That motion was seconded by Dorland Norris. The meeting was adjourned by Dr. Redding at 9:35 a.m.

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Innovation, Intervention, and Restructuring Task Force**

Name	Organization	12/18/09
Senator Pam Althoff	Illinois General Assembly	Present
Gina Burkhardt	CEO Learning Point Associates	Present
Representative Roger Eddy	Illinois General Assembly	Present
Donald Feinstein	Executive Director Academy for Urban School Leadership	Present
Susie Morrison	Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Staff Illinois State Board of Education	Absent
Dorland Norris	Deputy Superintendent Curriculum Design, Educational Services and Equity Champaign Unit 4 Schools	Present
<i>Chair</i> - Sam Redding	Director Center on Innovation & Improvement	Present
Senator Heather Steans	Illinois General Assembly	Absent
Jose Torres	Superintendent School District U-46	Absent