

Delaware's Partnership Zone

School Turnaround Governance Highlights

Delaware's Partnership Zone (PZ) is a multi-year initiative designed to produce dramatic improvement in Delaware's lowest achieving schools. Currently composed of the State's 10 persistently lowest achieving schools, the PZ aims to improve student achievement so schools realize adequate yearly progress by 2014. These schools remain a part of their districts, but receive support through the PZ to implement intervention models required under the Race to the Top and School Improvement Grant programs.¹ PZ schools work collaboratively with the State, external partners and the local community to produce measurable and sustainable gains in student achievement.

¹ Race to the Top States' plans include supporting their local educational agencies (LEAs) in turning around the lowest achieving schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models, which are also required under the School Improvement Grant program:

- **Turnaround model:** Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- **Restart model:** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, charter management organization or education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure model:** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model:** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms; (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how the PZ governance structure works and how the State supports districts as they select turnaround strategies and develop Memoranda of Understanding with their districts with PZ schools.

To support and monitor schools in the PZ, the Delaware Department of Education created the School Turnaround Unit. Four PZ schools implemented transformation models during the 2011–2012 school year. Six additional schools have been identified for the 2012-2013 school year and already received support and assistance to plan during the 2011-2012 school year. The School Turnaround Unit provides onsite monitoring, technical assistance and regular data collection, as well as access to experts, mentors, partners and best practices information. The School Turnaround Unit also monitors plan implementation to ensure that districts are improving student achievement.

PZ Requirements

Requirements for PZ schools are detailed in the State's accountability regulations:

Definition of PZ School: A PZ school is a persistently low-achieving school that is determined by the State Secretary of Education as likely to benefit from assignment to the PZ initiative. The Secretary determines which persistently low-achieving schools would benefit from PZ school status through consideration of the academic achievement of the “all students” group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State's assessments in reading and mathematics combined, the school's lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years, and qualitative measures as determined by the Secretary. The determination is made in consultation with the State Board of Education, Chief School Officers Association and Delaware State Education Association.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs):

Districts with a PZ school or PZ charter schools are required to agree to an MOU between the Delaware Department of Education and the district, and in return receive the flexibility and autonomy to institute innovative reform strategies. The MOUs are required to address the following:

- The school intervention model selected for implementation
- Provisions for regular oversight of the PZ school by the Delaware Department of Education or its designee
- Other provisions required by the model or mutually agreed upon by the district or charter school, which may include:
 - Flexible funding at the school level
 - Partnerships with outside entities, such as consultants or education management organizations
 - Extended learning time and mechanisms for family and community engagement

For schools where a collective bargaining agreement governs its employees, an additional agreement with the collective bargaining unit is required to address any subjects that might affect the implementation of reform models. Those issues include:

- Limitations (such as seniority limitations) on hiring, reassigning or transferring covered employees into and out of the PZ schools
- The methodology for determining which teachers will be transferred or reassigned as part of the model
- Work rules relating to the calendar and the scheduling of instructional and non-instructional time
- Instructional reform
- Professional development and other specialized training requirements
- Performance, retention and employment incentives

In the event that a district is not able to reach an agreement with the collective bargaining unit within 75 days of identification of a PZ school in the district, each party must present its last best offer on the areas of disagreement along with a draft agreement to the Secretary, who can accept one of the last best offers or reject all of them and order the parties to continue negotiations for an additional 30 days. If an agreement is not reached in that timeframe, the LEA has to enter into an MOU selecting a different school turnaround model. If no MOU is entered within 120 days from the date of notification that the school was selected for the PZ, the LEA's options are limited to choosing between closure, reopening the school as a charter, or contracting with a private management organization to operate the school.

PZ schools that are not making adequate yearly progress by the end of the second school year following implementation of the intervention model must renegotiate the MOU or select a different school intervention model.

Planning, Implementation and Technical Assistance

After a school is identified for inclusion in the PZ, the district begins the planning process and develops strategies to manage the intervention process. These strategies may include working with an external lead partner or building internal capacity. Once a management structure is in place, the district selects one of the four intervention models to implement in the school.

The PZ Planning Process

1. Identify a governance structure
2. Select an intervention model
3. Secure necessary conditions for turnaround
4. Develop a PZ plan

To assist districts in developing MOUs, selecting models and implementing management structures, the School Turnaround Unit has created a website dedicated to school turnaround. www.deturnaround.org

Planning Tools

Determining Governance Structures: Shortly after being identified for the PZ, districts are asked to identify a governance structure for the turnaround process. PZ schools are required to pursue one of two options: 1) realign current district staff roles and responsibilities by creating an in-district turnaround unit or 2) engage an external partner. The School Turnaround Unit has developed a self-assessment tool that districts use to measure their capacity to implement a new governance structure, determine a partnership strategy, identify areas of strength and challenge, and begin to plan how they will address those areas. The School Turnaround Unit also conducts one-on-one sessions with each district

to discuss their governance approach. <http://www.deturnaround.org/pzresources/technical-assistance/ta-session-1-selecting-an-intervention-model-governance-stru/module-4-governance-structure-for-turnaround/>

Selecting Intervention Models: As part of the PZ planning process, the School Turnaround Unit has developed templates of the turnaround models available for selection by the district. These templates are available on the school turnaround website at a page focused on PZ planning; the page also links to a document that shows how PZ districts implementing transformation or turnaround models should align their plans with School Improvement Grant requirements. <http://www.deturnaround.org/pzresources/pz-planning/>

Sample MOU: The School Turnaround Unit provides a sample MOU for use with schools that have collective bargaining units (see Appendix). <http://www.deturnaround.org/pzresources/technical-assistance/ta-session-2-teacher-and-leaders/MOU%20SAMPLE%20TEMPLATE%20doc%20FINAL.doc>

Resources

Delaware's accountability regulation:

<http://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/100/103.shtml#TopOfPage>

Delaware's overview of the PZ:

<http://www.deturnaround.org/general-information/DDOE%20PZ%20marketing%20document%20revised%2010%202011%202011.pdf>

Technical assistance presentation on PZ process:

<http://www.deturnaround.org/pzresources/technical-assistance/ta-session-1-selecting-an-intervention-model-governance-stru/DDOE%20PZ%20TA%20Session%20Presentation%209.20.11.pdf>

APPENDIX

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into by and between the XY School District (“District”) and the XYZ Education Association (“Association”).

The purpose of this agreement is to establish a framework of collaboration and an extended work agreement for the provisions required by designation of ABC School as a Partnership Zone school as defined in Delaware Administrative Code; Section 103 and resulting from the Federal Race to the Top grant.

Whereas, the District is party to a collective bargaining agreement with the Association that covers the non-administrative certified professional employees employed by the District;

Whereas, said collective bargaining agreement between the District and the Association expires on XX-XX-XXXX;

Whereas, said collective bargaining agreement, only as it pertains to ABC School, must be amended to allow for operational and staffing flexibility in accordance with the Delaware Administrative Code; Section 103 and Race to the Top grant requirement pertinent to Partnership Zone schools;

Whereas, the Association and the District’s Partnership Zone Committee have met concerning these amendments;

Now therefore, this XX day of XXXX, 20XX, the parties agree as follows:

1. To work collaboratively in the implementation of the ABC School Intervention Plan (“Plan”) in accordance with the attached recommended contract modifications.
2. To enter an extended work agreement (EWA) allowing for continuous input and collaboration by each party as details of the Plan are refined.
3. To ensure fidelity to the Plan.

This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved.

This Memorandum of Understanding shall be effective beginning with the date of the last signature hereon and ending upon the expiration of the Partnership Zone period (XX-XX-XXXX).

XYZ School District

By: _____

Association President

By: _____

Superintendent

By: _____

Board President

DISTRICT NAME

Collective Bargaining Agreement
School Name
Partnership Zone

RECOMMENDED CONTRACT MODIFICATIONS

Contract Element: Incentives and/or Rewards

Objective: To create an incentive structure to attract, retain and reward teachers who have a proven track record of increasing student achievement and who seek the challenge of teaching in a Partnership Zone school.

Existing Language	Recommended Contract Language

Contract Element: Master Schedule

Objective: To evaluate and redesign the teaching schedule to maximize resources and establish flexible operating conditions necessary to increase student achievement.

Existing Language	Recommended Contract Language

Contract Element: Staffing Decisions

Objective: To ensure that teachers are committed to the Partnership Zone plan that includes professional collaborations, professional development, intensive implementation of the established instructional strategies and an ability to provide increased learning time for students.

Existing Language	Recommended Contract Language

Contract Element: Teacher Evaluation

Objective: To enhance instructional practices and dramatically improve student achievement by creating high standards and effective teaching school-wide.

Existing Language	Recommended Contract Language

Contract Element: Flexible Operating Conditions

Objective: To create flexible work schedules and other conditions that support the Partnership Zone plan to dramatically increase student achievement.

Existing Language	Recommended Contract Language