



STATE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT SCHOOL TURNAROUND

One objective of the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) School Improvement Grants (SIG) and Race to the Top (RTT) program is to help states enhance their capacity to support the turnaround of low-performing schools.¹ This capacity may be important, given how difficult it is to produce substantial and sustained achievement gains in low-performing schools.^{2,3} There is limited existing research on the extent to which states have the capacity to support school turnaround and are pursuing strategies to enhance that capacity. This brief documents states' capacity to support school turnaround as of spring 2012 and spring 2013. It examines capacity issues for all states and for those that reported both prioritizing turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it. Key findings, based on interviews with administrators from 49 states and the District of Columbia, include the following:

- (1) More than 80 percent of states made turning around low-performing schools a high priority, but at least 50 percent found it very difficult to turn around low-performing schools.*
 - (2) Thirty-eight states (76 percent) reported significant gaps in expertise for supporting school turnaround in 2012, and that number increased to 40 (80 percent) in 2013.*
 - (3) More than 85 percent of states reported using strategies to enhance their capacity to support school turnaround, with the use of intermediaries decreasing over time and the use of organizational or administrative structures increasing over time.*
 - (4) States that reported both prioritizing school turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it were no more likely to report using intermediaries than other states, but all 21 of these states reported having at least one organizational or administrative structure compared with 86 percent (25 of 29) of all other states.*
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In recent years, policymakers and education leaders have prioritized improving our nation's low-performing schools. Nearly half of the nation's public schools (48 percent) did not make adequate yearly progress in 2011,⁴ and half of the nation's high school dropouts come from about 15 percent of high schools.⁵ Unfortunately, there are few examples to date of such low-performing schools producing substantial and sustained achievement gains.^{6,7} Substantial investments have been made in the form of School Improvement Grants (SIG) and Race to the Top (RTT) grants to try to tackle this challenge.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided \$97.4 billion for education, including \$3 billion for SIG. SIG provided low-performing schools with up to \$2 million per year for three years to implement one of four ED-specified school intervention models (see Appendix A for a complete description of these four models).⁸ Congress appropriated approximately \$5.1 billion for the general state RTT grant competition between 2009 and 2011, including approximately \$4.4 billion through ARRA.⁹ Improving low-performing schools was one of six topic areas that RTT emphasized.¹⁰ The other five topics were: (1) improving state capacity to support school improvement efforts; (2) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace; (3) building state data systems that measure student growth and inform school staff about how they can improve instruction; (4) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and

retaining effective teachers and principals; and (5) encouraging conditions in which charter schools can succeed.

Given the size of these federal investments, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is conducting a large-scale evaluation of RTT and SIG to better understand the implementation and impacts of these programs. This brief was developed as part of this effort and focuses on states' capacity—broadly defined to include funding, staff, technology, staff expertise, and the ability to identify and leverage expertise—to support school turnaround.¹¹ Improving low-performing schools, and states' capacity to support such efforts, are key areas that SIG and RTT grants targeted.

States may play an important role in tackling the challenges of school turnaround. For example, states might realign resources to better meet school needs, provide or broker external support, monitor and address school progress and barriers to improvement, or create incentives to stimulate achievement gains.^{12,13,14} States with higher capacity may be able to play this role more effectively, which is why SIG and RTT provided additional resources to improve state capacity to support school turnaround.^{15,16} However, concerns linger about state capacity to continue to support improving low-performing schools once SIG and RTT funding runs out, typically after three or four years.¹⁷

Researchers have identified capacity challenges and barriers that states confront as they try to implement education policy. For example, states may have insufficient state education agency (SEA) staff, limited federal or state funding, inadequate technology resources, and gaps in expertise.¹⁸ SEA organizational silos may inhibit cross-divisional communication.^{19,20} Bureaucratic barriers, such as noncompetitive salaries or hiring freezes, may make it hard to attract and retain staff.²¹ In particular, states with smaller populations and a high incidence of low-performing schools are more likely to report having insufficient staff to implement education initiatives.^{22,23}

A small but growing body of research has examined strategies states use to leverage or enhance their capacity to support school turnaround. For example, states have aligned resources, structures, and support systems to encourage local steps that may facilitate school turnaround.²⁴ These reported approaches include hiring skilled teachers, enacting effective instructional practices, using data to drive instruction, and holding staff accountable for student performance. Interviews with state officials and analyses of state policy documents indicate that states may use intermediaries (such as institutions of higher education, education service agencies, and other external assistance providers) to expand available expertise, provide technical assistance, and identify ineffective practices that hinder school improvement.²⁵ Some states alter or establish new SEA administrative structures to better align them with school improvement priorities and try to improve the flow of information and expertise among SEA divisions.^{26,27}

Nevertheless, limited research exists on the extent to which states have the capacity to support turning around low-performing schools and whether they use specific strategies to enhance it. This brief begins to address this gap by examining the extent to which states reported that they:

1. Prioritized school turnaround but also had concerns about accomplishing their turnaround goals
2. Had significant gaps in expertise to support turnaround
3. Adopted strategies to enhance their capacity to support turnaround

Examining the first topic will shed light on where states think they are in terms of their general capacity to support turnaround. Examining the second topic will shed light on the specific capacity constraints states are facing and where additional supports could be warranted. Examining the third

topic will shed light on what strategies, if any, states are using to try to address the capacity constraints they reported.

This brief examines these three topics for the full set of states we interviewed (described in more detail below). It also presents information on the third topic for the subset of states that reported both prioritizing school turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it. These states have the greatest need to build capacity in order to achieve their stated priority goal of turning around low-performing schools. It is thus of interest to examine what, if any, strategies these particular states are adopting to enhance their capacity to support turnaround. For this subset of states and all states, we examine what they reported on these topics in spring 2012 and spring 2013. Examining changes over time is of interest given the substantial infusion of resources into school turnaround in recent years through RTT and SIG.

Data and Methods

The data in this brief came from structured telephone interviews with administrators in 49 states and the District of Columbia conducted in spring 2012 and spring 2013. The response rate was 98 percent in 2012 and 100 percent in 2013. Texas did not participate in the 2012 interview. Because we could not examine change between 2012 and 2013 for Texas, it was excluded from this brief. We refer to 50 *states* for simplicity while recognizing that this group includes the District of Columbia.

These interviews collected information about educational policies, practices, and supports related to the six primary RTT topic areas. In spring 2012 and spring 2013, states were asked whether policies, practices, and supports were currently in place. In spring 2012, states were also retrospectively asked whether *a subset of* policies, practices, and supports were in place in 2007–2008. While the study team took several steps to try to improve recall accuracy,²⁸ data provided by states were self-reported and not independently verified by the study team. Thus, particular caution should be taken when interpreting data from 2007–2008.

Interviews were organized into modules (one for each of the six areas). Typically, each module was conducted separately and with a different respondent or set of respondents who had expertise in the module topic. The study team provided the questions for each module to the states in advance of the interview. States then designated as respondents the state administrators who they felt were most knowledgeable about each area. The study team encouraged the respondents to consult with others as necessary in advance of the interview to ensure that their responses were accurate. Each question received only one response per state. For simplicity, we refer to administrator respondents as *states*.

To limit the length of the interview, we sought input from IES and the RTT program office on which questions were of greatest interest to them. See Table B.1. in Appendix B for the state interview questions used in this brief. We conducted pilot tests of the instrument and provided training to the data collection team to ensure the uniformity and consistency of the data collected. Interviewers followed a structured script and asked all the questions as worded. The interview questions were mostly closed-ended—that is questions with “yes” or “no” responses or with a set of specific response categories from which to choose. As a result, these variables were already in a format suitable for analysis. Closed-ended questions sometimes included an “other-specify” response option to allow respondents to provide an alternate response option if the pre-established responses were not sufficient or applicable to their state.²⁹

Some states did not respond to all the interview questions.³⁰ For each question we analyzed, we excluded the states that did not respond to that question from the analysis. In the figures and tables, we provide ranges for the sample sizes to indicate that nonresponse varied across questions.

This brief first examines the three topics listed above for the full set of states interviewed (including the District of Columbia). It then examines the third topic for the subset of 21 states that reported prioritizing school turnaround *and* having significant gaps in expertise to support it in *both* spring 2012 and spring 2013.³¹ The wording of the interview questions about gaps in expertise included the word “significant” as a modifier. This brief therefore reports the number of states who felt that they had significant gaps in expertise. We asked states this question without defining “significant” for them.³²

Given the small sample of 50 states, none of the differences between groups of states reported in this brief were tested for statistical significance. Readers should keep in mind that the particular states that reported an activity in one year and those that reported it in the other year are not necessarily the same, even if the total number of states that reported the activity is the same in both years.

Because RTT encouraged grantees to build state capacity to support turnaround,³³ one might expect to see differing results for RTT and non-RTT states. Appendix C presents a supplementary analysis of the topics listed above, by RTT status.

After describing findings in this brief, we present potential explanations for those findings. These explanations are just examples, and other explanations are possible. Our data do not allow us to determine whether any of the possible explanations are correct. However, they do offer starting points for future investigation.

More Than 80 Percent of States Made Turnaround a High Priority, But at Least 50 Percent Found It Difficult to Turn Around Low-Performing Schools

Most of the 50 states reported that turning around low-performing schools was a priority. In spring 2012, 42 states (84 percent) reported prioritizing turnaround to a great extent, but 29 of them (58 percent) also reported that this initiative was one of their three most difficult to accomplish (out of seven initiatives we asked about; see items SC3 and SC4 in Table B.1 in Appendix B for the state interview questions used in this analysis). Similarly, in spring 2013, 41 states (82 percent) reported prioritizing turnaround to a great extent, but 25 of them (50 percent) also reported that this initiative was one of their three most difficult to accomplish.³⁴ Examining states’ priorities for the other initiatives is beyond the scope of this brief – a future report will present findings for the other initiatives.

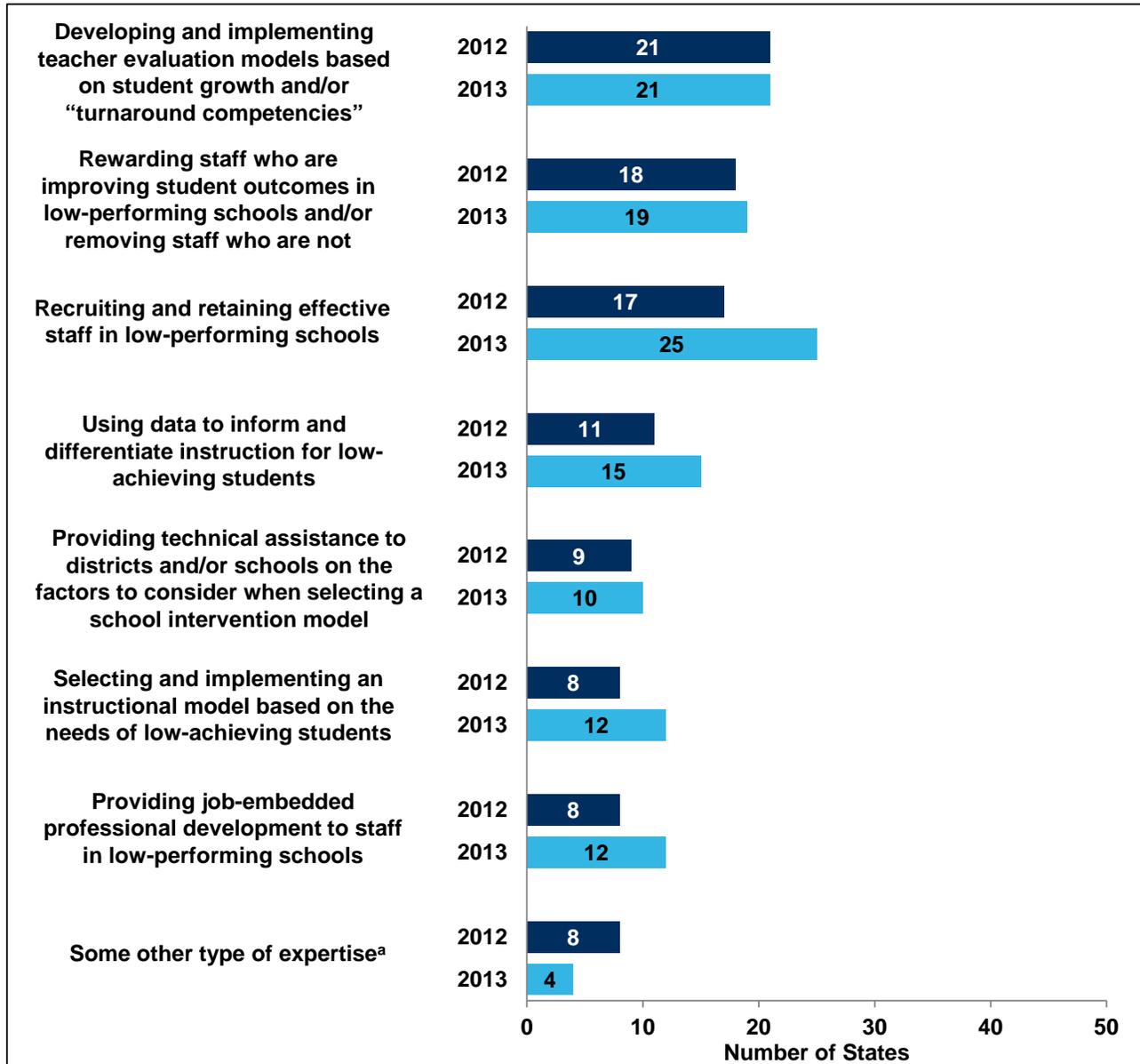
Several scenarios may explain why most states found turnaround so difficult. Because research on effective strategies for sustaining turnaround in low-performing schools is limited, states may be uncertain how to pursue this goal. Moreover, turning around a school with a history of low performance is complex and challenging. Studies have shown that low-performing schools are rarely able to produce substantial and sustained achievement gains, and case studies have documented numerous obstacles to turnaround efforts.^{35,36,37}

Thirty-Eight States (76 percent) Reported Significant Gaps in Turnaround Expertise in 2012, and That Number Increased to 40 (80 percent) in 2013

We asked 50 states in spring 2012 and spring 2013 whether they had significant gaps in expertise for supporting districts and/or schools in turning around low-performing schools.³⁸ We asked about

this on two levels: (1) gaps in expertise for supporting turnaround broadly and (2) specific gaps in expertise for supporting turnaround strategies encouraged by SIG. For example, we asked states if they had significant gaps in areas like developing and implementing teacher evaluation models based on student growth and/or “turnaround competencies.” See Figure 1 for the eight specific gaps related to SIG strategies that we asked states about.

Figure 1. Number of States That Reported Significant Gaps in Expertise in Eight Specific Areas Related to Supporting the SIG Program, Spring 2012 and Spring 2013



Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013, item SC17 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: The analysis for this figure used 49–50 states in spring 2012 and 50 states in spring 2013 (for simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a state). We provide a range for the 2012 sample size because nonresponse varied across items. The sample size for “providing job-embedded professional development to staff in low-performing schools” in 2012 was 49 states. The sample size for all other analyses in this figure was 50 states. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews.

Figure 1 (*continued*)

^a Other types of expertise in which states reported having significant gaps include: (1) working with ELL and Native American students, (2) developing and executing high quality performance monitoring systems, (3) providing support to districts, and (4) defining and supporting principal leadership reforms.

We examined state responses to each of these two questions separately. When asked broadly about their expertise to support districts and schools in the turnaround process (the first question), 18 states reported significant gaps in expertise in spring 2012, and 22 reported significant gaps in spring 2013 (row 1 in Table 1).

When focusing on just the eight specific gaps in expertise to support the SIG program (the second question), 36 states reported significant gaps in at least one area in spring 2012, and 35 states reported significant gaps in at least one area in spring 2013 (row 2 in Table 1). For six of these eight areas, the number of states that reported significant gaps in expertise to support specific SIG turnaround strategies increased between spring 2012 and spring 2013 (Figure 1). The gap that increased most between spring 2012 (17 states) and spring 2013 (25 states) was related to strategies for recruiting and retaining effective staff in low-performing schools.

To get an overall sense for whether a state had any gaps in expertise to support turnaround, we combined state responses to the first and second questions (see item SC16f and items SC17a–SC17h in Table B.1 in Appendix B). The number of states that reported at least one significant gap in expertise (either broadly or related specifically to SIG) increased from 38 states in spring 2012 to 40 states in spring 2013 (row 3 in Table 1).³⁹

Table 1. Number (and Percentage) of States That Reported Significant Gaps in Expertise to Support Turnaround Broadly or the SIG Program Specifically, Spring 2012 and Spring 2013

	Number (Percentage) of States that Reported	
	In Spring 2012	In Spring 2013
1. Having a gap in expertise to support districts and schools in the turnaround process	18 (36%)	22 (44%)
2. Having at least one of eight specific gaps in expertise to support the SIG program	36 (72%)	35 (70%)
3. Having <i>either</i> a gap in expertise to support districts and schools in the turnaround process (row 1) <i>or</i> at least one of eight specific gaps in expertise to support the SIG program (row 2)	38 (76%)	40 (80%)

Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: The analysis for this table included 49–50 states in spring 2012 and 50 states in spring 2013 (for simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a *state*). We provide a range for the 2012 sample size because nonresponse varied across items: The sample size for item SC17f, “providing job-embedded professional development to staff in low-performing schools,” in 2012 (included in the analysis for rows 2 and 3 of Table 1) was 49 states. The sample size for all other items included in the 2012 analysis for this Table was 50 states. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews. The results presented in row 1 of Table 1 are based on analysis of item SC16f (see Table B.1 in Appendix B). The results presented in row 2 of Table 1 are based on analysis of items SC17a–SC17h (see Table B.1 in Appendix B). The results presented in row 3 of Table 1 are based on analysis of item SC16f as well as items SC17a–SC17h.

In none of these eight specific areas did a majority of states report having a significant gap in expertise to support that SIG turnaround strategy. However, the three areas in which states most commonly reported significant gaps in SIG expertise were all related to teacher staffing, evaluation, and compensation policies. For example, in spring 2013, states reported significant gaps in their expertise in (1) developing and implementing teacher evaluation models based on student growth and/or “turnaround competencies” (21 states), (2) rewarding staff who are improving student outcomes in low-performing schools and/or removing staff who are not (19 states), and (3) recruiting and retaining effective staff in low-performing schools (25 states) (Figure 1).⁴⁰

We offer two potential explanations for why so many states reported significant expertise gaps in at least some areas related to supporting turnaround. First, although state steps to engage intermediaries or enhance organizational structure (discussed in the next section) might expand the breadth and reach of state activities and deploy additional expertise, time, and resources, these steps may still fail to directly address gaps in *state* expertise. For example, if the intermediaries work directly with low-performing schools and state staff do not have the time or resources to learn the specific needs of the schools themselves, or to provide oversight of the external services being provided, the gaps in the state’s expertise will remain.⁴¹ Second, some problems affecting states’ gaps in expertise may not be easily addressed by using intermediaries or by redefining, reorganizing, or creating new SEA staff roles and responsibilities. Such problems—which may include hiring freezes, insufficient talent pipelines, unattractive salaries, or frequent staff turnover—may constrain states’ capacity to provide continuous, consistent, high-quality expertise and services to support turnaround.^{42,43}

More Than 85 Percent of States Used Strategies to Enhance Capacity, With the Use of Intermediaries Decreasing Over Time and the Use of Organizational or Administrative Structures Increasing

As mentioned above, we examined the third topic (strategies to enhance capacity to support turnaround) separately for two groups of states: (1) all 50 states and (2) the subset of states that reported both prioritizing school turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it. This section describes results for all states; the next section describes results for the subset of states.

We examined two strategies states could use to enhance their capacity to support turnaround. First, we examined whether states reported working with five types of intermediaries, such as regional branches of the state Department of Education, or contractors or consultants who support the state Department of Education’s work but are not paid as Department of Education employees. Intermediaries might help increase state capacity if they work directly with SEA staff to build their turnaround expertise but might not increase capacity if they work directly with low-performing schools and have only limited interaction with SEA staff. Second, we examined whether states reported having six types of organizational or administrative structures to support turnaround, such as staff designated to support turnaround, state or regional turnaround offices, or monitoring of turnaround schools. Adding organizational structures within the SEA could increase capacity if they help break down silos that inhibit cross-divisional communication. Organizational structures can also help to facilitate the alignment of resources and support systems for districts and schools. However, if systemic or bureaucratic barriers persist, organizational structures may not increase capacity.^{44,45} An administrative structure such as monitoring might increase capacity by providing information that helps the state differentiate supports or consequences to schools based on their progress, or by alerting the state to the need for changes in approach.^{46,47}

Most states reported working with intermediaries to support turnaround, and the number of states that reported doing so decreased between spring 2012 and spring 2013. In spring 2012 and spring 2013, 47 and 44 states (94 and 88 percent) reported working with at least one of five types of intermediaries to support turnaround. In spring 2013, the most common types of intermediaries with which states reported working were federally supported centers or labs, such as comprehensive centers, regional education laboratories, equity assistance centers, or content centers (42 states), and institutions of higher education (42 states) (Figure 2). Because all states can request support from federally supported centers or labs at no cost, it is not surprising that so many states reported using this type of intermediary.

Figure 2. Number of States That Reported Working with Five Types of Intermediaries to Support School Turnaround, Spring 2012 and Spring 2013

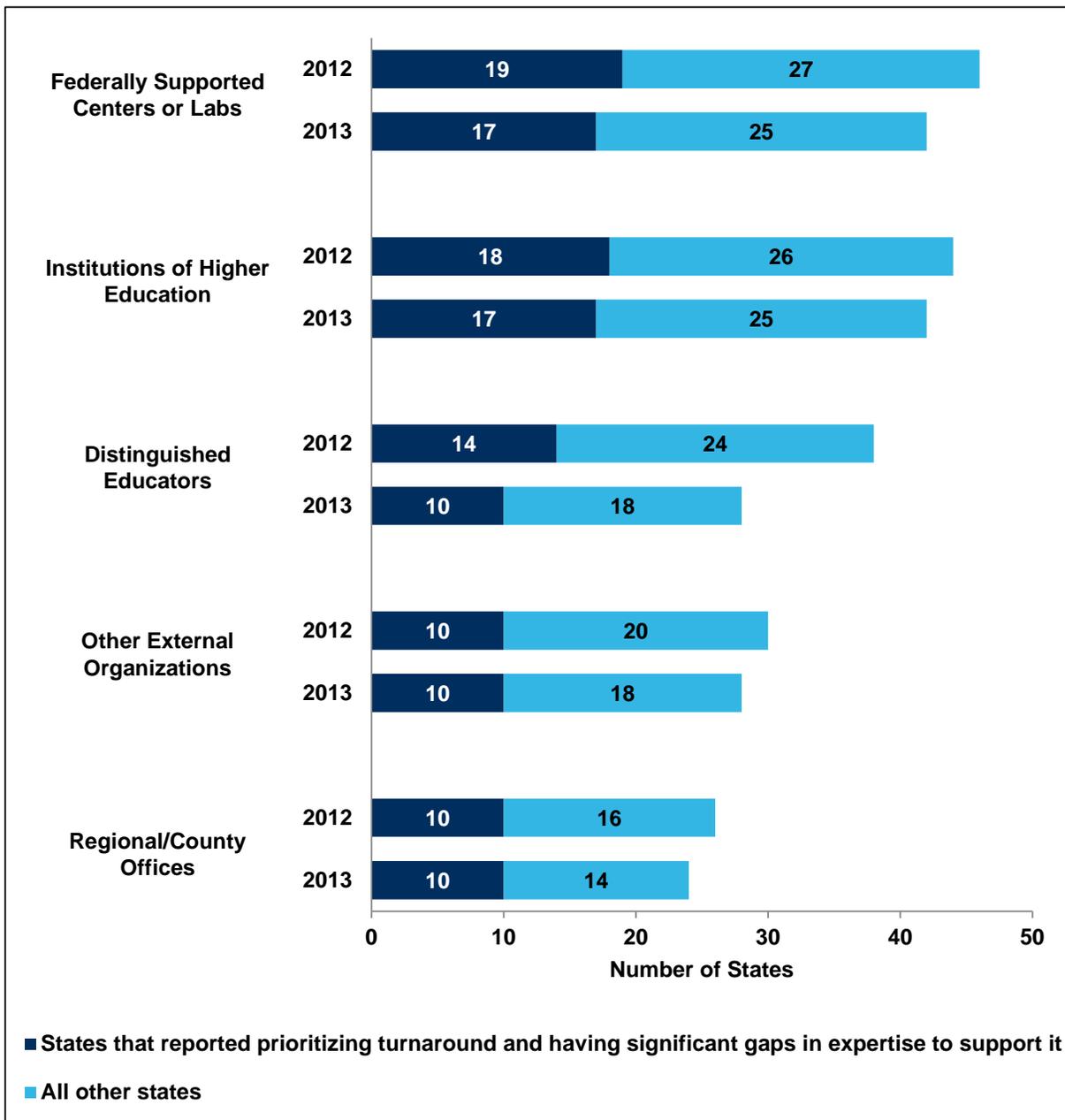


Figure 2 (continued)

Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013, item SC14 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: The analysis for this figure used 50 states (for simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a state): 21 states that reported prioritizing turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it in both 2012 and 2013, and 29 other states. States that responded “no” to question SC13 asking if the state agency works with any intermediaries were not asked question SC14 about the specific types of intermediaries which with they work. In response to question SC13, 47 states in spring 2012 and 44 states in spring 2013 indicated that they worked with intermediaries. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews. “Distinguished educators” include educators contracted by the state to support the implementation of statewide education reform policies.

Many states reported expecting intermediaries to work with particular types of low-performing schools or the districts in which these schools were located. These types of low-performing schools included SIG- or RTT-funded schools (44 states in spring 2012 and 41 states in spring 2013) and schools identified for improvement, restructuring, or corrective action under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (42 states in spring 2012 and 35 states in spring 2013).

The decreases in the number of states that reported working with each type of intermediary to support turnaround were generally modest (2 to 4 states for all but one type of intermediary) (Figure 2). The exception was the number of states that reported working with distinguished educators as intermediaries, which decreased by 10 states (from 38 states in spring 2012 to 28 in spring 2013) (Figure 2). “Distinguished educators” include educators contracted by the state to support the implementation of statewide education reform policies.

One possible explanation for the finding that most states reported working with intermediaries to support turnaround is that, even before RTT and SIG, many states had worked with external providers to assist low-performing schools through their statewide support systems for schools identified for improvement under NCLB.⁴⁸ For example, a national longitudinal study of states’ implementation of NCLB suggests that states often turned to these types of intermediaries to help them address the needs of the growing number of schools that were being identified for improvement.⁴⁹ Another possibility is that since all states received SIG during that time period, they may all have been encouraged to work with intermediaries.⁵⁰

Most states reported having organizational or administrative structures to improve capacity to support turnaround in 2012–2013, and the number of states having such structures increased between 2007–2008 and 2012–2013. Forty-six states (92 percent) reported having at least one organizational or administrative structure in 2012–2013 (Table 2). This reflects an increase of 21 states relative to 2007–2008, prior to RTT and SIG. All of this increase had occurred by 2011–2012.

The most commonly reported structures in 2012–2013 were monitoring and reporting requirements for SIG/RTT (46 states), contracts with external consultants (34 states), and a designated state-level school turnaround office (32 states) (Table 2). The number of states having each type of structure increased between 2007–2008 and 2012–2013, however most of these increases had occurred by 2011–2012. Overall, the number of states having each structure increased by at least 7 states between 2007–2008 and 2011–2012 and increased by no more than 4 states between 2011–2012 and 2012–2013.

Table 2. Number (and Percentage) of States That Reported Having Structures to Improve Their Capacity to Support School Turnaround in 2007–2008, 2011–2012, and 2012–2013

	Number (Percentage) of States		
	All States Examined in This Brief	States that Reported Prioritizing Turnaround and Having Significant Gaps in Expertise to Support it	All Other States (Those That Either Did Not Report Prioritizing Turnaround or Did Not Report Having Significant Gaps in Expertise to Support it)
Having any structure:			
2007–2008 ^a	25 (51%)	10 (48%)	15 (54%)
2011–2012	46 (92%)	21 (100%)	25 (86%)
2012–2013	46 (92%)	21 (100%)	25 (86%)
Having the following structures:			
Contracts with external consultants			
2007–2008 ^a	18 (38%)	8 (40%)	10 (36%)
2011–2012	31 (62%)	17 (81%)	14 (48%)
2012–2013	34 (68%)	16 (76%)	18 (62%)
Monitoring or reporting requirements for SIG and/or RTT-funded schools ^b			
2007–2008 ^a	12 (25%)	5 (25%)	7 (25%)
2011–2012	46 (92%)	21 (100%)	25 (86%)
2012–2013	46 (92%)	21 (100%)	25 (86%)
SEA staff designated to support school turnaround but no state-level turnaround office			
2007–2008 ^a	11 (23%)	3 (15%)	8 (29%)
2011–2012	19 (38%)	6 (29%)	13 (45%)
2012–2013	21 (42%)	11 (52%)	10 (34%)
Designated state-level school turnaround office			
2007–2008 ^a	10 (21%)	5 (25%)	5 (18%)
2011–2012	28 (56%)	15 (71%)	13 (45%)
2012–2013	32 (64%)	14 (67%)	18 (62%)
Regional office staff designated to support school turnaround but no regional turnaround offices			
2007–2008 ^a	3 (6%)	1 (5%)	2 (7%)
2011–2012	13 (26%)	6 (29%)	7 (24%)
2012–2013	14 (28%)	7 (33%)	7 (24%)
Designated regional school turnaround offices			
2007–2008 ^a	2 (4%)	1 (5%)	1 (4%)
2011–2012	9 (18%)	3 (14%)	6 (21%)
2012–2013	10 (20%)	3 (14%)	7 (24%)
Number of States	47–50	20–21	27–29

Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013; items TA13 and TA14 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf), and items TA15 and TA16 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: We provide ranges for the sample sizes because nonresponse varied across items. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews. For simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a *state*. All 50 states are included for all items presented in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. For

Table 2 (continued)

2007–2008: (1) there is one state (in the “all other states” subgroup) with missing responses for each item presented, (2) there is one state (in the “all other states” subgroup) that responded to the question asking about “having any structure,” but did not respond to the subsequent items presented in the table, and (3) there is one state (in the “prioritizing turnaround and having gaps” subgroup) that did not respond to the question about having “regional office staff designated to support school turnaround but no regional turnaround offices.”

^a Data from 2007–2008 were collected retrospectively in spring 2012. All data provided by states were self-reported and not independently verified by the research team. For these reasons and potential concerns about recall accuracy, particular caution should be taken when interpreting data from 2007–2008.

^b In spring 2012 and spring 2013, states were asked whether monitoring or reporting requirements were in place for SIG and/or RTT-funded schools for the purpose of improving state capacity to support school turnaround. In spring 2012, states were also asked a narrower question focused on monitoring and reporting requirements for SIG-funded schools for this purpose in 2007–2008. The question focused only on SIG for that time period because the RTT program did not exist in 2007–2008.

SEA = state education agency

There are several potential explanations for the increase in the extent to which states reported having organizational or administrative structures to improve their capacity to support turnaround. First, this might reflect the effect of the RTT grants on state policies. RTT aimed to increase states’ capacity to implement policies in several areas, including school turnaround, and the increase over time could reflect RTT states’ progress toward achieving those goals. Second, non-RTT states might have increased their use of certain types of organizational structures, either in preparation for submitting an RTT application or due to the publicity that the practices promoted by RTT received. Third, the increase might reflect the effect of SIG on state policies. States were permitted to set aside five percent of their SIG funds for administration, evaluation, and technical assistance, so they could have used some of those funds to change their organizational and administrative structures. Fourth, the increase could reflect a general movement toward more capacity-building structures for turnaround that was spurred by one or more factors other than RTT and SIG. In this case, we would expect increases even in the absence of RTT and SIG. Finally, the increase could simply be due to recall errors of states’ organizational or administrative structures in 2007–2008. As noted earlier, data from 2007–2008 were collected retrospectively in spring 2012.

States That Prioritized Turnaround and Had Significant Gaps in Turnaround Expertise Were No More Likely to Use Intermediaries, But All 21 of These States Reported Having at Least One Structure Compared With 86 Percent (25 of 29) of Other States

In spring 2012 and spring 2013, for the five types of intermediaries to support turnaround that we examined, states that prioritized turnaround and had significant gaps in expertise to support it were no more likely than other states to report working with each type of intermediary (Figure 2). For example, in spring 2013, states that prioritized turnaround and had significant gaps in expertise were no more likely to report working with institutions of higher education (17 of 21 states [81 percent] versus 25 of 29 states [86 percent]).

For four of six types of organizational or administrative structures that we examined, states that prioritized turnaround and had significant gaps in expertise to support it were more likely than other states to report having that structure in both 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 (Table 2). For example, in both school years, states that prioritized turnaround and had significant gaps in expertise were more likely to report having contracts with external consultants (17 of 21 states [81 percent] versus 14 of 29 states [48 percent] in 2011–2012 and 16 of 21 states [76 percent] versus 18 of 29 states [62 percent]

in 2012–2013). However, it is important to bear in mind that the overall differences between these two groups of states on these measures appear to be generally modest (between 2 to 3 states).

Several possible explanations may account for these findings. First, SIG funding and program requirements may have encouraged all states to use intermediaries for the purpose of school turnaround.⁵¹ Indeed, most states (47 of 50 in 2012 and 44 of 50 in 2013) reported working with at least one of five types of intermediaries for that purpose. Many states have an established history of working with external partners to assist low-performing schools—for example, to provide a statewide system of support for Title I schools identified for improvement,⁵² so states may have continued leveraging such partnerships to promote turnaround under SIG. Second, states that reported prioritizing turnaround and having gaps in expertise to support it may have been more likely than other states to establish certain structures over time to meet their priority goals or to address gaps in expertise to support turnaround. Consistent with such a hypothesis, we often found larger differences in reported administrative structures between these two groups of states in 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 than in 2007–2008.

Conclusion

Most states reported prioritizing turnaround as a statewide education policy in spring 2012 and spring 2013. Most states also reported that turnaround was one of their three most difficult policy goals to achieve. Factors contributing to this difficulty may include significant gaps in expertise for supporting school turnaround, which 21 of these states reported in both spring 2012 and spring 2013. More than 85 percent of all states reported using strategies that might help enhance their capacity to support turnaround, including working with intermediaries and having organizational or administrative structures to support turnaround. States that prioritized turnaround and had significant gaps in expertise to support it were no more likely to report using intermediaries, but they were more likely to report having some organizational or administrative structures than other states. After describing these findings in this brief, we presented potential explanations for the findings. While our data do not allow us to determine whether any of the possible explanations are correct, they do offer starting points for future investigation. Future briefs and reports will present additional results from the study.

APPENDIX A**RACE TO THE TOP AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT INTERVENTION MODELS
AS DESCRIBED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION SIG GUIDANCE (2012)****I. Turnaround Model**

A turnaround model is one in which a local education agency (LEA) must do the following:

- (1) Replace the principal and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach in order to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates
- (2) Use locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students:
 - A. Screen all existing staff and rehire no more than 50 percent
 - B. Select new staff:
 1. Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the turnaround school.
 2. Provide staff with ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.
 3. Adopt a new governance structure, which may include, but is not limited to, requiring the school to report to a new "turnaround office" in the LEA or state education agency (SEA), hire a "turnaround leader" who reports directly to the superintendent or chief academic officer, or enter into a multiyear contract with the LEA or SEA to obtain added flexibility in exchange for greater accountability.
 4. Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with state academic standards.
 5. Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students.
 6. Establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time.
 7. Provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2012, pp. 27–28)

II. Restart Model

A restart model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO) that has been selected through a rigorous review process. A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school (see C-6) (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 31).

III. Closure Model

School closure occurs when an LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 34).

IV. Transformation Model

An LEA implementing a transformation model must:

- (1) Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.
- (2) Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that:
 - A. Take into account data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates.
 - B. Are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.
- (3) Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.
- (4) Provide staff with ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.
- (5) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2012, pp. 37–38)

APPENDIX B

STATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USED FOR ANALYSES IN THIS BRIEF

Table B.1. State Interview Questions Addressing State Capacity to Support School Turnaround

Topic	Interview Questions Addressing State Capacity to Support School Turnaround
<p>Prioritization of school turnaround as a statewide policy initiative</p>	<p>SC3. To what extent (great extent, moderate extent, little extent, or not at all) is each of the following educational reform initiatives a priority in your state for the current school year? k. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</p>
<p>Perceived difficulty in accomplishing school turnaround</p>	<p>SC4. Which three of the following types of reforms do you feel have been most difficult to accomplish in your state? Please code no more than three. Please indicate 1 for the most difficult to accomplish, 2 for the second most difficult, and 3 for the third most difficult. a. Adopting and implementing college and career ready standards and assessments; b. Building comprehensive, student-level, longitudinal data systems; c. Using data to improve instruction; d. Recruiting, retaining, rewarding, and developing effective teachers and school leaders; e. Developing and implementing a teacher and principal evaluation system that is based on student growth; f. Improving the distribution of effective teachers and principals; g. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</p>
<p>Significant gaps in expertise related to school turnaround and the SIG program</p>	<p>SC16. Do you have significant gaps in any of the following areas of expertise at the state level? Please briefly describe any yes responses. f. Supporting districts and/or schools in the process of turning around low-achieving schools</p> <p>SC17. Focusing specifically on the School Improvement Grants program, do you have significant gaps in any of the following areas of expertise at the state level? Again, please briefly describe any yes responses. a. Using data to inform and differentiate instruction for low-achieving students; b. Selecting and implementing an instructional model based on the needs of low-achieving students; c. Developing and implementing teacher evaluation models based on student growth and/or “turnaround competencies”; d. Recruiting and retaining effective staff in low-achieving schools; e. Rewarding staff who are improving student outcomes in low-achieving schools and/or removing staff who are not; f. Providing job-embedded professional development to staff in low-achieving schools; g. Providing technical assistance to districts and/or schools on the factors to consider when selecting a school intervention model; h. Some other type of expertise</p>
<p>Use of intermediaries^a</p>	<p>SC13. Does your state education agency currently work with any intermediaries to support the implementation of statewide education reform priorities in any of the following areas? For each reform area selected, please briefly describe the role assigned to intermediaries in that area. a. Implementing college and career ready standards and assessments; b. Using data to improve instruction; c. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and school leaders; d. Turning around your state’s lowest-achieving schools; e. Providing supports for English language learners; f. Increasing state capacity in any of the areas just mentioned; g. Some other reform area</p> <p>SC14. Within the past year, did the state education agency work with any of the following type(s) of intermediaries to support the implementation of statewide education reform priorities in the various reform areas that we just discussed? a. Federally supported comprehensive center, regional educational laboratory, equity assistance center, or content center; b. Institution of higher education; c. Regional/county offices; d. Educators contracted by the state such as distinguished educators; e. Other external organizations; f. Something else (SPECIFY)</p> <p>SC15. Continuing to focus on the intermediaries with whom the state education agency worked in the past year, with which of the following groups were these intermediaries expected to work? a. State-level staff; d. Schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB and/or the districts in which these schools are located; e. Schools that received School Improvement Grant funds or Race to the Top funds to implement one of the four U.S. Department of Education-specified school intervention models and/or the districts in which these schools are located</p>

Table B.1 (continued)

Topic	Interview Questions Addressing State Capacity to Support School Turnaround
Use of organizational or administrative structures to improve state capacity to support school turnaround	<p>TA13. Does the state currently have any organizational or administrative structures specifically intended to improve state capacity to support school turnaround efforts?</p> <p>TA14. Which of the following organizational or administrative structures are in place in your state for this purpose? a. State office explicitly designated to support school turnaround; b. Regional offices explicitly designated to support school turnaround; c. Contracts with external consultants to support school turnaround; d. State Department of Education staff explicitly designated to support school turnaround, but no state-level turnaround office; e. Regional staff explicitly designated to support school turnaround, but no regional state turnaround offices; g. Monitoring or reporting requirements specifically for schools receiving School Improvement Grants and/or Race to the Top funds to implement a school intervention model; h. Something else (SPECIFY)</p> <p>TA15. In the 2007-2008 school year, did the state have any organizational or administrative structures that were specifically intended to improve state capacity to support school turnaround efforts?</p> <p>TA16. In the 2007-2008 school year, which of the following organizational or administrative structures were in place in your state for this purpose? a. State office explicitly designated to support school turnaround; b. Regional offices explicitly designated to support school turnaround; c. Contracts with external consultants to support school turnaround; d. State Department of Education staff explicitly designated to support school turnaround, but no state-level turnaround office; e. Regional staff explicitly designated to support school turnaround, but no regional state turnaround offices; g. Monitoring or reporting requirements specifically for schools receiving School Improvement Grants funds to implement a school intervention model; h. Something else (SPECIFY)</p>

Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

^a The introductory text read to respondents provided the definition of intermediary: "I now would like to ask you about your state's approach to working with or through 'intermediaries' to support the implementation of statewide education reforms and priorities. These 'intermediaries' may be regional branches, contractors, consultants, or grant recipients of the state Department of Education, who support the state department of education's work but are not paid as state Department of Education employees."

APPENDIX C

ANALYSIS OF STATE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT SCHOOL TURNAROUND, BY RTT STATUS

We conducted a supplementary analysis to examine the extent to which RTT and non-RTT states reported having significant gaps in expertise to support turnaround and the strategies they reported using to enhance capacity to support turnaround.

The analysis presented in this appendix distinguishes three groups of states:

- (1) States that were awarded RTT grants in Rounds 1 or 2 (“early RTT states”)⁵³
- (2) States that were awarded RTT grants in Round 3 (“later RTT states”)⁵⁴
- (3) Non-RTT states⁵⁵

The capacity of these three groups of states to support and sustain school turnaround efforts may differ. For example, states that received RTT grants may have used the funding to implement more strategies to improve state capacity. These findings cannot prove that RTT *caused* any observed differences between RTT and non-RTT states because RTT states might have initiated reforms even without the grants. They simply characterize state capacity as reported by each group of states.

We also distinguish between states that received RTT funding in Rounds 1 or 2 as opposed to Round 3, with regard to *timing*, *levels of funding*, and *scope* of activity. Round 1 awards were made in March 2010, Round 2 awards in August 2010, and Round 3 awards in December 2011. When we collected data for this brief in spring 2012 and spring 2013, Round 1 and 2 states had been implementing their RTT plans substantially longer than Round 3 states. Therefore, one might expect differing progress from Round 3 states.

Funding levels also differed between rounds. The awards to the 12 grantees in the first two rounds ranged from \$75 million to \$700 million, while awards to the 7 grantees in the third round ranged from \$17 million to \$43 million.⁵⁶ These different funding levels are another reason one might expect differing progress from Round 3 states.

Finally, the scope of the Round 3 grants differed from that of the earlier rounds. In the Round 3 application, ED acknowledged the smaller grant size and asked applicants to focus on a subset of the reforms that they had proposed in their earlier application for RTT funds. In contrast, the states from Rounds 1 and 2 were asked to implement policies in all six areas listed in the application criteria. The six areas in the RTT application criteria were: (1) state success factors, (2) standards and assessments, (3) data systems to support instruction, (4) great teachers and leaders, (5) turning around the lowest-achieving schools, and (6) state reform conditions.

Because grants were competitively awarded, the three groups of states might be expected to differ, and in several respects, they do (Table C.1). On average, early and later RTT states served higher percentages of black, Hispanic, and Asian students than non-RTT states. Early and later RTT states had a higher proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Early and later RTT states had more schools eligible for SIG and a larger percentage of schools eligible for Title I funds. Early and later RTT states had higher student enrollment and were more likely to be located in the Northeast and South. Readers should keep this context in mind when interpreting the comparisons in this appendix, as receipt of an RTT grant is not the only difference between the groups of states.

Figure C.1, Figure C.2, and Table C.2 present information analogous to Figure 1, Figure 2, and Table 2 in the brief. The only difference is that in the figures and table below, we present the information separately for early RTT states, later RTT states, and non-RTT states.

Table C.1. State Characteristics by RTT Status, 2011–2012

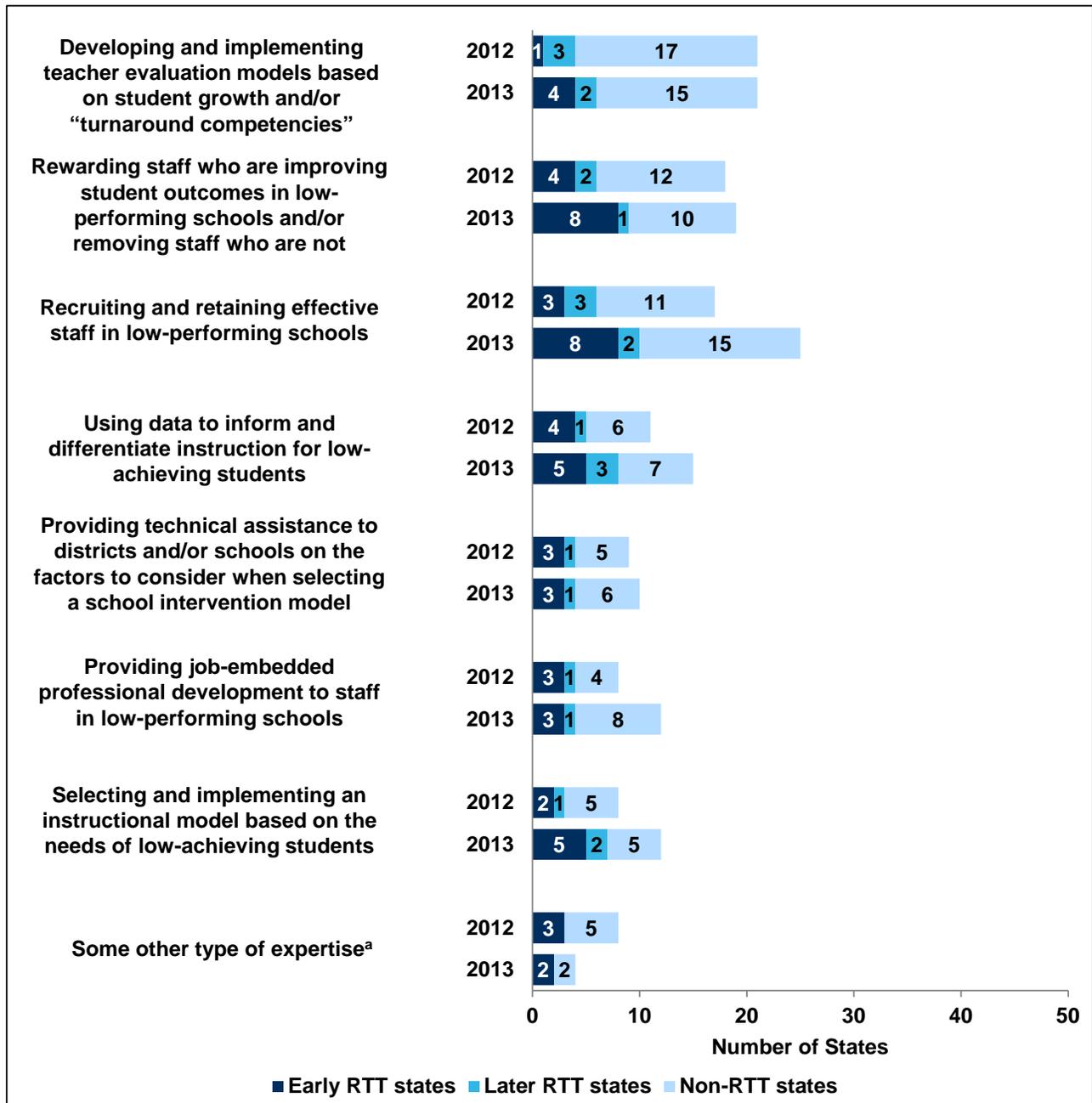
	Early RTT States (received RTT grants in rounds 1 or 2)	Later RTT States (received RTT grants in round 3)	Non-RTT States (did not receive RTT grants in rounds 1, 2, or 3)
Percentage of Students in the Following Race/Ethnicity Categories			
White, non-Hispanic	47.5	56.9	66.8
Black, non-Hispanic	25.7	16.6	10.5
Hispanic	14.3	19.7	13.1
Asian	6.1	3.6	2.9
Other	6.4	3.3	6.7
Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced- Price Lunch	50.1	48.0	46.1
Average Student Enrollment	1,143,902	1,225,906	720,416
Percentage of Schools Eligible for Title I	73.6	70.7	69.2
Average Number of Schools Eligible for SIG ^a	402	401	264
Number (Percentage) of States in the Following Regions:			
Northeast	3 (25%)	2 (29%)	4 (13%)
Midwest	1 (8%)	1 (14%)	10 (32%)
South	7 (58%)	2 (29%)	7 (23%)
West	1 (8%)	2 (29%)	10 (32%)
Number of States	12	7	31

Source: 2011–2012 and 2010–2011 Common Core of Data; IES database of SIG-eligible schools, available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20114019/pdf/20114019.pdf>.

Note: We weighted the student characteristics in the table by total student enrollment. We weighted the school characteristics in the table by the total number of schools with a nonmissing value for Title I status. Student and school characteristics were calculated using 2011–2012 Common Core of Data because this was the most recent year of data available at the time the brief was prepared. However, for two states, the percentage of schools eligible for Title I is from the 2010–2011 Common Core of Data, because their 2011–2012 data were missing. The value for each state was first calculated by summing the total number of students in each category in the state and dividing by the total number of students in the state, and then the values were averaged across states. For simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a *state*.

^a Includes schools eligible for SIG in fiscal year 2010 (Cohort I) and fiscal year 2011 (Cohort II).

Figure C.1. Number of States That Reported Significant Gaps in Expertise in Seven Areas Related to Supporting the SIG Program, by RTT Status, Spring 2012 and Spring 2013

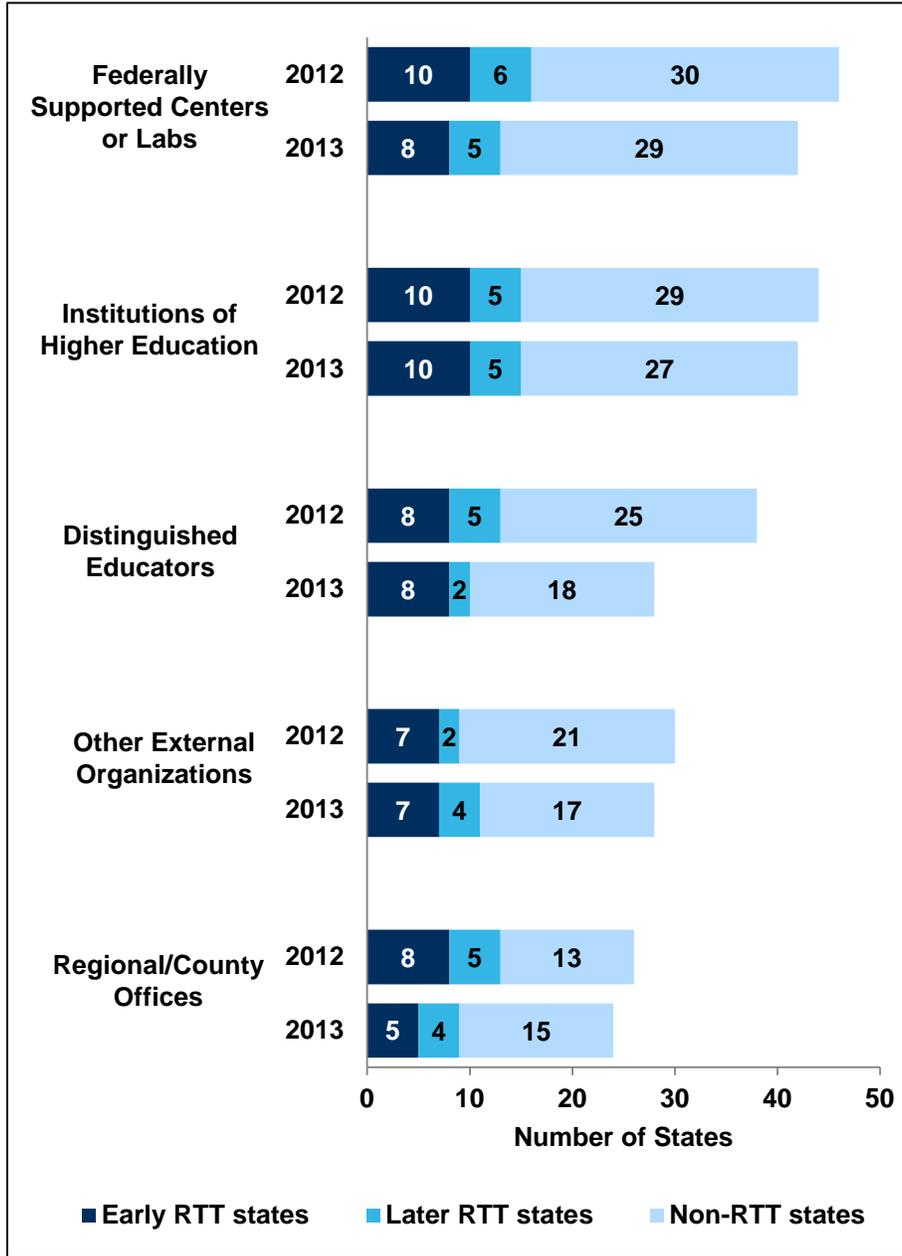


Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013, item SC17 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: The analysis for this figure used 49–50 states in spring 2012 and 50 states in spring 2013 (for simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a state): 12 early RTT states, 7 later RTT states, and 30–31 non-RTT states. We provide a range for the sample sizes because nonresponse varied across items. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews.

^a Other types of expertise in which states reported having significant gaps include: (1) working with ELL and Native American students, (2) developing and executing high quality performance monitoring systems, (3) providing support to districts, and (4) defining and supporting principal leadership reforms.

Figure C.2. Number of States That Reported Working with Five Types of Intermediaries to Support School Turnaround, by RTT Status, Spring 2012 and Spring 2013



Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013, item SC14 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf and http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: The analysis for this figure used 50 states (for simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a *state*): 12 early RTT states, 7 later RTT states, and 31 non-RTT states. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews. “Distinguished educators” include educators contracted by the state to support the implementation of statewide education reform policies.

Table C.2. Number (and Percentage) of States That Reported Having Structures to Improve Their Capacity to Support School Turnaround in 2007–2008, 2011–2012, and 2012–2013, by RTT Status

	Number (Percentage) of States			
	All States Examined in This Brief	Early RTT States (received RTT grants in rounds 1 or 2)	Later RTT States (received RTT grants in round 3)	Non-RTT States (did not receive RTT grants in rounds 1, 2, or 3)
Having any structure:				
2007–2008 ^a	25 (51%)	7 (58%)	6 (86%)	12 (40%)
2011–2012	46 (92%)	12 (100%)	7 (100%)	27 (87%)
2012–2013	46 (92%)	12 (100%)	7 (100%)	27 (87%)
Having the following structures:				
Contracts with external consultants				
2007–2008 ^a	18 (38%)	5 (42%)	5 (83%)	8 (27%)
2011–2012	31 (62%)	8 (67%)	6 (86%)	17 (55%)
2012–2013	34 (68%)	9 (75%)	4 (57%)	21 (68%)
Monitoring or reporting requirements for SIG-and/or RTT-funded schools ^b				
2007–2008 ^a	12 (25%)	3 (25%)	3 (50%)	6 (20%)
2011–2012	46 (92%)	12 (100%)	7 (100%)	27 (87%)
2012–2013	46 (92%)	12 (100%)	7 (100%)	27 (87%)
SEA staff designated to support school turnaround, but no state-level turnaround office				
2007–2008 ^a	11 (23%)	3 (25%)	2 (33%)	6 (20%)
2011–2012	19 (38%)	1 (8%)	2 (29%)	16 (52%)
2012–2013	21 (42%)	3 (25%)	3 (43%)	15 (48%)
Designated state-level school turnaround office				
2007–2008 ^a	10 (21%)	3 (25%)	3 (50%)	4 (13%)
2011–2012	28 (56%)	12 (100%)	5 (71%)	11 (35%)
2012–2013	32 (64%)	11 (92%)	5 (71%)	16 (52%)
Regional office staff designated to support school turnaround but no regional turnaround offices				
2007–2008 ^a	3 (6%)	1 (8%)	1 (17%)	1 (3%)
2011–2012	13 (26%)	3 (25%)	4 (57%)	6 (19%)
2012–2013	14 (28%)	2 (17%)	3 (43%)	9 (29%)
Designated regional school turnaround offices				
2007–2008 ^a	2 (4%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
2011–2012	9 (18%)	4 (33%)	2 (29%)	3 (10%)
2012–2013	10 (20%)	3 (25%)	3 (43%)	4 (13%)
Number of States	47–50	12	6–7	29–31

Source: Interviews with state administrators in spring 2012 and spring 2013, items TA15 and TA16 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/spring_2012_state_interview_protocol.pdf), and items TA13 and TA14 (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/spring_2013_state_interview_protocol.pdf).

Note: We provide ranges for the sample sizes because nonresponse varied across items. Texas is excluded from the analysis because it did not participate in the 2012 interviews. For simplicity, the District of Columbia is counted as a state.

^a Data from 2007–2008 were collected retrospectively in spring 2012. All data provided by states were self-reported and not independently verified by the research team. For these reasons and potential concerns about recall accuracy, particular caution should be taken when interpreting data from 2007–2008.

^b In spring 2012 and spring 2013, states were asked whether monitoring or reporting requirements were in place for SIG and/or RTT-funded schools for the purpose of improving state capacity to support school turnaround. In spring 2012, states were also asked a narrower question focused on monitoring and reporting requirements for SIG-funded schools for this purpose in 2007–2008. The question focused only on SIG for that time period because the RTT program did not exist in 2007–2008.

SEA = state education agency

ENDNOTES

¹ Gottfried, M.A., Stecher, B.M., Hoover, M., & Brown Cross, A. (2011). *Federal and state roles and capacity for improving schools*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/2011/RAND_TR989.pdf.

² Hansen, M., & Choi, K. (2011). *Chronically low-performing schools and turnaround: Findings in three states* (Calder Working Paper No. 60). Washington, DC: Calder Center. Available at <http://www.caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/wp-60.pdf>.

³ Stuit, D. (2010). *Are bad schools immortal? The scarcity of turnarounds and shutdowns in both charter and district sectors*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

⁴ ED Data Express: Data about elementary & secondary schools in the U.S. Available at <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-main.cfm>.

⁵ Burrus, J., & Roberts, R.D. (2012). Dropping out of high school: Prevalence, risk factors, and remediation strategies. *R & D Connections*, 18, 1–9. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

⁶ Hansen & Choi, op. cit.

⁷ Stuit, op. cit.

⁸ Hurlburt, S., Therriault, S.B., & Le Floch, K.C. (2012). *School improvement grants: Analyses of state applications and eligible and awarded schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20124060/pdf/20124060.pdf>.

⁹ The U.S. Department of Education conducted other RTT grant competitions in addition to the general state grant competition. In 2011, 2012, and 2013, states competed for RTT Early Learning Challenge grants, which awarded approximately \$1 billion across three rounds of grants to support efforts to improve early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality early learning programs for all children. In 2012 and 2013, school districts competed for \$500 million in RTT District grants, which supported local education reform initiatives that emphasized personalized learning environments. In 2014, the Obama administration proposed investing \$300 million in a new RTT competition promoting educational equity and opportunity. These other RTT programs are not a focus of this study.

¹⁰ For more on RTT, see U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Race to the Top Program: Executive summary*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

¹¹ Le Floch, K.C., Boyle, A., & Therriault, S.B. (2008a). *Help wanted: State capacity for school improvement*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

¹² Le Floch, K.C., Boyle, A., & Therriault, S.B. (2008b). *State systems of support under NCLB: Design components and quality considerations*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.air.org/resource/state-systems-support-under-nclb-design-components-and-quality-considerations>.

¹³ Gottfried, Stecher, Hoover, & Brown, op. cit.

¹⁴ Rhim, L.M. (2013). *State-initiated school turnaround strategies: Leveraging the state education agency to drive meaningful change*. Sacramento, CA: Center on School Turnaround. Available at <http://centeronschoolturnaround.org/new-monograph-state-initiated-school-turnaround-strategies-leveraging-the-state-education-agency-to-drive-meaningful-change-rhim/>.

¹⁵ SIG guidance indicates that states can set aside five percent of the grant for state-level efforts to support the program, including building capacity. See U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012). *Guidance on fiscal year 2010 School Improvement Grants under Section 1003(G) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance11012010.pdf>.

¹⁶ Section A of the RTT application describes requirements for state success factors, including building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans. See U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Race to the Top program: Executive summary*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available at

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>. In addition, guidance provided in the RTT Frequently Asked Questions document states that a state grantee must subgrant 50 percent of RTT funds to local education agencies (LEAs) based on participating LEAs' shares of Title I, Part A Funds, but the state has considerable flexibility in how it uses the other 50 percent to support its reform plan (e.g., to fund state-level activities, LEA disbursements). See U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Race to the Top program guidance and frequently asked questions*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/faq.pdf>.

¹⁷ Gottfried, Stecher, Hoover, & Brown, op. cit.

¹⁸ Le Floch, Boyle, & Therriault, 2008a, op. cit.

¹⁹ Minnici, A., & Hill, D. (2007). *Educational architects: Do state education agencies have the tools necessary to implement NCLB?* Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.

²⁰ Jochim, Y., & Murphy, P. (2013). *The capacity challenge: What it takes for state education agencies to support school improvement*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Available at http://crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_capacity%20challenge_dec13_0.pdf.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Minnici & Hill, op. cit.

²³ Le Floch, Boyle, & Therriault, 2008a, op. cit.

²⁴ Rhim, op. cit.

²⁵ Massell, D., Goertz, M.E., & Barnes, C.A. (2012). State education agencies' acquisition and use of research knowledge for school improvement. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 87(5), 609–626.

²⁶ Minnici & Hill, op. cit.

²⁷ Brown, C.G., Hess, F.M., Lautzenheiser, D.K., & Owen, I. (2011). *State education agencies as agents of change: What will it take for states to step up on education reform?* Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and the Center for American Progress.

²⁸ Questions asking respondents to recall what happened in earlier years (such as 2007–2008) might be subject to recall bias. To address this concern, we sent our interview protocols to each respondent prior to the interview. In addition to drawing attention to items that required respondents to look up information prior to the interview, we directed their attention to questions that covered the 2007–2008 school year to make sure that they were prepared to answer those questions during the interview. For example, they may have needed to obtain the information about that period from a colleague or ask that a colleague with more knowledge of that time period also participate in the interview. We pilot tested this process to assess the extent to which respondents were able to report information on the 2007–2008 school year, specifically asking if respondents found it difficult or had any problems recalling that period. All respondents reported that they were able to accurately answer questions about that time period. Further, interviewers reported that respondents who were not in their current position during the earlier time period tended to ask colleagues who were knowledgeable about policies or practices at the earlier time to join the interview or to provide responses prior to the interview.

²⁹ We used a three-step process to quantify data from these “other-specify” responses to help ensure the coding decisions were made consistently and reliably. First, we developed a set of new response categories based on an analysis of the major themes that emerged from the responses interviewees provided. Second, an analyst reviewed the individual “other-specify” responses and either recoded them into one of the existing structured response categories or coded them into one of the new response categories, as appropriate. A second analyst reviewed each coding decision. Third, a senior team member reviewed any coding discrepancies and finalized the coding. We did not calculate inter-rater agreement statistics.

³⁰ Values can be missing for various reasons: (1) because the respondent did not complete the interview; (2) because the respondent completed the interview but did not complete the question; (3) because the respondent chose “don't know,” “refused,” or “not applicable,”; or (4) because the question was logically skipped based on earlier responses.

³¹ There were 10 states that reported both prioritizing turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it *in 2012 but not in 2013*. Among these 10 states, 5 no longer reported prioritizing turnaround in 2013, and 5 no longer reported having significant gaps in expertise to support it in 2013. There were 11 states that reported both prioritizing turnaround and having significant gaps in expertise to support it *in 2013 but not in 2012*. Among these 11 states, 3 did not report prioritizing turnaround in 2012, and 8 did not report having significant gaps in expertise in 2012.

³² The use of the word significant in this context does not mean “statistically significant.”

³³ Department of Education, 2010, op. cit.

³⁴ While the overall number of states that prioritized turnaround was relatively constant between 2012 and 2013, priorities did shift between 2012 and 2013 for a number of states. Six states reported prioritizing turnaround in 2012 but no longer reported prioritizing it in 2013. Five states did not report prioritizing turnaround in 2012 but did report prioritizing it in 2013.

³⁵ Hansen & Choi, op. cit.

³⁶ Stuit, op. cit.

³⁷ Aladjem, D.K., Birman, B.F., Orland, M., Harr-Robins, J., Heredia, A., Parrish, T.B., & Ruffini, S.J. (2010). *Achieving dramatic school improvement: An exploratory study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. Available at http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/dramatic-improvement-report.pdf.

³⁸ As shown in Table B.1, the wording of the interview questions about gaps in expertise included the word “significant” as a modifier. The use of the word significant in this context does not mean “statistically significant.”

³⁹ While the overall number of states that reported significant gaps in expertise (either related to turnaround broadly or related specifically to SIG) was relatively constant between 2012 and 2013, the reported gaps did shift between 2012 and 2013 for a number of states. Seven states reported at least one significant gap in 2012 but none in 2013. Nine states reported no significant gaps in 2012 but at least one in 2013. Three states reported no significant gaps in either 2012 or 2013.

⁴⁰ SIG defines “turnaround competencies” as competencies that can be used as part of a rigorous recruitment, screening, and selection process to identify educators with qualities that equip them to succeed in the turnaround environment. See <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance11012010.pdf>.

⁴¹ Laguarda, K.G. (2003). *State-sponsored technical assistance to low-performing schools: Strategies from nine states*. Chicago, IL: Policy Studies Associates.

⁴² Minnici & Hill, op cit.

⁴³ Jochim & Murphy, op cit.

⁴⁴ Minnici & Hill, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Brown, Hess, Lautzenheiser, & Owen, op. cit.

⁴⁶ Redding, S., & Walberg, H.J. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook on statewide systems of support*. Center on Innovation and Improvement. Information Age Publishing.

⁴⁷ Herman, R., Graczewski, C., James-Burdumy, S., Murray, M., Perez-Johnson, I., & Tanenbaum, C. (2014). *Operational authority, support, and monitoring of school turnaround* (NCEE 2014-4008). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

⁴⁸ NCLB codified specific requirements for states to develop support systems for school improvement that included the use of intermediaries, such as institutions of higher education, education service agencies, and other external assistance providers (Section 1117(a)(4)).

⁴⁹ Taylor, J., Stecher, B., O’Day, J., & Le Floch, K.C. (2010). *State and local implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act: Volume IX—Accountability under NCLB: Final report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/nclb-accountability/nclb-accountability-final.pdf>.

⁵⁰ SIG promotes the use of external providers at the local level to support schools' implementation of intervention models. For example, Section I.A.2 of the final SIG requirements requires that schools implementing the restart model partner with a charter management organization or education management organization. In addition, federal SIG guidelines require that SEAs ensure applicant LEAs have taken or will take action to recruit, screen, and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality, and federal SIG guidance highlights how districts and schools receiving SIG may use external providers to supply technical expertise in implementing various components of the school intervention models. SIG guidance also explains that SEAs may provide services such as contracting with external providers on behalf of an LEA (e.g., if the LEA lacks the capacity to do so). See U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012). *Guidance on fiscal year 2010 School Improvement Grants under Section 1003(G) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance11012010.pdf>.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Education, 2012, op. cit.

⁵² Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, & Le Floch, op cit.

⁵³ We combined Round 1 and Round 2 RTT states for several reasons: the funding amounts and scope of the grants in those rounds were similar, only two states received Round 1 RTT grants, and the first two rounds of grants were awarded within roughly five months of each other. The 2 Round 1 states were Delaware and Tennessee. The 10 Round 2 states were the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

⁵⁴ The 7 Round 3 states were Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

⁵⁵ Four of the non-RTT states (Alaska, Vermont, North Dakota, and Texas) did not apply for RTT grants.

⁵⁶ The size of the awards in each round was based on each state's share of the national student population and the overall amount of funds allocated to the program in that round.

For more information on the full study, please visit:

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/projects/evaluation/other_racetotop.asp



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