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An Evaluation Of Lead Turnaround Partners' Services In Virginia

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ABSTRACT

School reform in K–12 education has experienced a cycle of changes that requires the implementation of stringent mandates for increased student achievement and sanctions for school divisions not meeting the required benchmarks. The purpose of this study is to identify school-based services that Lead Turnaround Partners (LTPs) provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores. The study utilized a systematic review approach to data collection that will analyze Lead Turnaround Partners' Scope of Work, Quarterly Reports, and Standards of Learning Achievement archival data. A program evaluation was used to document services provided by the LTP that improved, stagnated, or resulted in the decline of student achievement on the state reading assessment. The overarching research question that shaped the study is: What services did LTPs provide priority elementary schools selected for this study relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' SOL reading assessment scores? The contextual influences of the study are priority schools identified by the Virginia Department of Education during the 2013–2014 school year and ending during the 2016–2017 school year.

The four priority elementary schools in the study that collaboratively worked with Lead Turnaround Partners for a period of two years had an increase in student achievement on the SOL reading assessment for students in third through fifth grade. There were common school-

based services that emerged across all four schools that can be attributed to laying the foundation for the increase in SOL reading academic achievement scores. The evaluation process revealed that improving student achievement would require targeted content coaching and professional development. The data showed that out of the nine themes, seven focused on providing teachers with targeted instructional support.

Recommendations from the study suggest: A plan should be collaboratively developed between the school leadership and LTP for the first year the LTP transitions out. The needs assessment, scope of work, and plan delivery should be built into the turnaround process; the VDOE and district leadership should develop a three-year sustainable improvement plan that is continuously monitored by state provided Lead Partners, Division Superintendents, and School Administrators; the monitoring process should be extended for an additional two to three years after the services of the LTPs have been concluded.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The focus of school turnaround has changed from isolated reform elements such as modifying reading programs, improving teachers, or redesigning individual schools to a more comprehensive approach of building the capacity of a school district's ability to create sustained reform. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2002a) introduced the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Program that was authorized under Title I, Part F of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The focus of the CSR Program was to raise student achievement through proven methods and strategies that produce comprehensive school reform. Grants were awarded to approximately 3,000 Title I schools in all 50 states that demonstrated the greatest need to improve student achievement. Schools used the grants to contract outside partners experienced in school-wide reform to develop programs that addressed 11 components in this area (USDOE, 2002a). This program became an important element for school improvement under the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind of 2001 (NCLB, 2002).

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) outlined national performance goals for all publicly funded educational institutions (NCLB, 2002). The legislation was enacted to significantly close the achievement gap for subgroups of students from racially and economically diverse backgrounds while annually increasing performance standards in reading, mathematics, and graduation rates (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2016). Under NCLB, every state was required to develop specific grade-level benchmarks. Each state was required to administer assessments to evaluate the percentage of proficient students in specific schools and school districts as identified by their achievement of grade-level benchmarks (Shaul & Ganson, 2005). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required each state to establish a timeline for

adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets. NCLB specifically stated that achievement level targets increase at least every three years with the provision that by the year 2014, 100% of all third through twelfth-grade students demonstrate proficiency of the state standards in English and mathematics.

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, schools administer the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in Grades 3 through 8 in reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. High school students in Grades 9 through 11 are administered SOL assessments in selected courses that result in a verified credit to determine academic proficiency and eligibility for graduation. As mandated by NCLB, each state must set benchmarks identified as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in reading and math, which reduce the proficiency gap between the highest and lowest performing schools (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2013). Schools that successfully meet all AMOs are considered accredited and meeting standards. During 2012–2013 through 2016–2017, Virginia's annual measurable objectives (AMOs) were as follows: 75% reading, 70% mathematics, 70% science and 70% history. Schools that miss one or more performance indicators were identified as unaccredited and low-performing. If a school consistently misses meeting one or more academic performance measures the school will be identified as priority focus and in need of improvement (VDOE, 2013).

In Virginia, five percent of the lowest-achieving Title I schools were labeled *priority schools*. The schools were required to select a turnaround model and a Lead Turnaround Partner to improve student achievement (VDOE, 2013). According to Mass Insight (2010), the role of the LTP is to build capacity for instructional effectiveness to ensure continuous improvement for further growth. Based on state assessments administered during the 2013–2014 school year the Virginia Department of Education released a list of 36 low-performing schools. Schools

designated as priority received 1003(a) and/or 1003(g) federal school improvement grant funding to implement research-based school reform initiatives. Out of the 36 schools, four are priority elementary schools that will be represented in the study. During the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, Lead Turnaround Partners were approved by the Virginia Department of Education to collaboratively work with schools identified as priority.

A review of the literature indicates multiple states have utilized external partners to assist with school reform. Published reports highlight practices of LTPs and how states and districts can help or inhibit their improvement efforts in persistently low-achieving schools (Corbett, 2011). Areas of research include: existing marketplace (both supply and demand), the varying definitions of the LTP role, the organizational structures of the LTP's roles and responsibilities, lessons learned, and recommendations for future LTP partnerships (Corbett, 2011). However, there were no published studies found that focused on how LTP partnerships with the lowest performing priority schools led to successful student academic outcomes. Therefore, the focus of this study was to identify school-based services that the LTPs provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores.

Background of the Problem

Students in the Commonwealth of Virginia are expected to demonstrate proficiency of the state curriculum standards. The Virginia Curriculum Framework outlines expectations for student learning in grades K–12, in the following content areas: English, mathematics, science, history, and writing (VDOE, 2010). The state accountability assessment that is associated with the Virginia Curriculum Framework is the Standards of Learning (SOL). Within the Commonwealth of Virginia, student pass rates for a current school year are based on the previous

year's testing administration. For example, student pass rates from 2014–2015 are based on the 2013–2014 testing administration. The Virginia Board of Education establishes the pass rates and benchmarks.

In 2010, Virginia received $59.8 million through the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program to raise student achievement in the commonwealth's persistently lowest-achieving schools. The funds were part of the $3.5 billion in school-improvement funding for states in the 2009 federal budget and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Corbett, 2011). Persistently low-achieving schools receiving SIG funds and implement turnaround, transformation, or restart models are required to use LTPs.

Low-performing schools not receiving SIG funds may use LTPs. The purpose of collaboration between priority schools and LTPs is to increase student achievement at schools that have historically performed poorly (Corbett, 2011). The role of LTPs is to provide the necessary support to build capacity for instructional effectiveness, so that when it exits, the school will continue to embed effective practices and utilize the continuous improvement cycle for further growth (Corbett, 2011). To date, no published studies have focused on how LTPs' partnerships with the lowest performing schools in a district in the state of Virginia led to successful student academic outcomes in reading and mathematics.

Statement of the Problem

In 2010, the VDOE approved seven LTPs to collaborate with priority schools that selected the transformation or turnaround model as part of the SIG requirements in Virginia. At this time there is no documented research conducted to determine what LTP, if any, influenced student achievement positively or negatively during the collaboration with the LTPs. While each LTP provides a detailed plan for improving student achievement in reading and mathematics, there is a paucity of literature that focuses on school-based services LTPs used during their

partnership with priority elementary schools in Virginia with the outlined goals of improving student academic performance. Corbett (2011) further noted that there is a severe lack of information about the performance of the LTPs. Therefore, the problem to be studied is the lack of analysis of what school-based services were provided by the LTP in priority elementary schools selected for this study that had a Lead Turnaround Partner.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify school-based services that Lead Turnaround Partners provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores. Analyzing the LTP's scope of work and completion reports will assist with identifying school-based services that were implemented over a two-year period that made a direct impact on student achievement. In 2009–2010, the Virginia Board of Education adopted more rigorous standards in mathematics and English (VDOE, 2013). This study specifically focused on literacy programs and services provided by the LTP. In Virginia, fewer students are passing third-grade standardized reading tests, a concerning trend for what experts describe as the most important predictor of a student's future academic success (Mattingly, 2018). The Center for Public Education (2015) found that one in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate that is four times higher than that for proficient readers. Reading is the gateway skill to further learning. Children who cannot read proficiently seldom catch up academically and often fail to graduate on time from high school or drop out altogether (Hernandez, 2011).

Research Questions

1. What factors led to the choice of turnaround partners to be assigned to priority schools?
2. How were school-based services identified?
3. To what degree were the school-based services provided as documented by the stakeholder schools?
4. How did achievement in reading change over the life of the grant?

Assumptions, Scope, and Limitations

The study focused on identifying school-based services that the LTPs provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores. Findings about this process will inform other external turnaround partners, turnaround leaders, teachers, central office personnel, principal preparation programs, and human resource professionals about how decisions are made in an environment that is in the change process. The process was documented from the LTP's application process, the scope of work, quarterly reports, SOL reading scores, and end of year completion plans for identified priority schools that utilized an LTP for two years. This analysis will assist educational professionals with making realistic and unrealistic connections with theory and practice as pertains to improving student achievement in persistently low-achieving schools (Corbett, 2011).

The study makes the following assumptions. Priority schools and LTPs collaboratively created and implemented school improvement plans with fidelity. Student performance data were reported correctly. Lead Turnaround Partners and school personnel were honest in their reporting of school improvement strategies and goals. Principals leading turnaround schools have

turnaround experience or a track record of improving student performance. Lastly, the LTP scope of work and end of year reports aligned with division and state improvement expectations.

The data examined in this study represent the achievement levels of students and schools within the Commonwealth of Virginia and recognizes four main limitations. First, the study is limited to LTPs serving four priority elementary schools in one state. Overall student pass rates from 2014–2015 through 2015–2016 on the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments in reading for cohorts of students in third through fifth grades were examined. The focus of this study was to identify school-based services that the LTPs provided to Priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores.

The second limitation is related to student outcomes. In 2009–2010, the Virginia Board of Education adopted more rigorous standards in mathematics and English. Students were assessed on the new standards beginning in 2012–2013 for English. The changed assessments resulted in declined scores throughout the Commonwealth (VDOE, 2013).

The third limitation of the study is that all schools received different levels of funding based on the number of students in the population. The Virginia Department of Education had no requirements on what percentages of the SIG funds will be spent on instruction, human capital, or professional development. Therefore, funding was at varying percentages for each school.

The fourth limitation is that principal leadership and teacher turnover will affect implementing the LTP's scope of work consistently. These retention and persistence realities can severely limit the ability of schools, particularly high-poverty schools, to initiate and sustain school improvement efforts necessary to achieve real gains for students (New Teacher Center, 2014). The level of accountability that each LTP maintained at each priority school with high

percentages of leadership and teacher turnover can directly impact student performance on the SOL reading assessments.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The Commonwealth of Virginia allowed divisions to choose an LTP but with VDOE input in terms of which models and partners might work best based on the first implementation year and which conditions should be negotiated during the contracting process (Corbett, 2011). In effect, states could assist schools and districts by helping them select an LTP based on the local needs, the local capacity limitations, and the strengths of the various partners. The significance of the study is to provide the Virginia Department of Education, district leadership, and other struggling districts the opportunity to analyze lessons learned from Virginia in its efforts to utilize external partners to improve academic performance in the lowest-achieving schools. The study can provide insight to leaders of change to consistently evaluate best practices used when influencing organizational change. Other benefits of the study are significant findings that provide additional research to the field of school improvement and assist school leaders in developing coaching and support plans for turnaround leaders with an emphasis on building capacity for improved student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

Bold school turnaround initiatives strive to dramatically change performance in 18–24 months and establish the foundation for the school to succeed long term (Rhim, 2012). Distinct from incremental change efforts, turnaround efforts aim to provide a material educational benefit to students currently enrolled in school. Effective turnaround efforts require the collaborative commitment of district- and school personnel (Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene, Maynard, Redding, & Darwin, 2008). School reform efforts absent of ongoing collaboration are not

sufficient, sustainable, or scalable. Thus, a systemic approach and district commitment to the process is key to turnaround success (Rhim, 2012).

Figure 1 depicts a graphical representation of the research related to school turnaround reform efforts. Based on the current research available on school turnaround reform, there are multiple paradigms that must be considered. For school turnaround reform to be successful, all levels of the organization must be involved, including district level leadership, school level leadership, and classroom teachers. As shown in the graphic, both district level leadership and school level leadership have a substantial influence on school turnaround reform efforts. Classroom teacher practices also have a significant influence on school reform efforts (Player, Hambrick-Hitt, & Robinson, 2014).

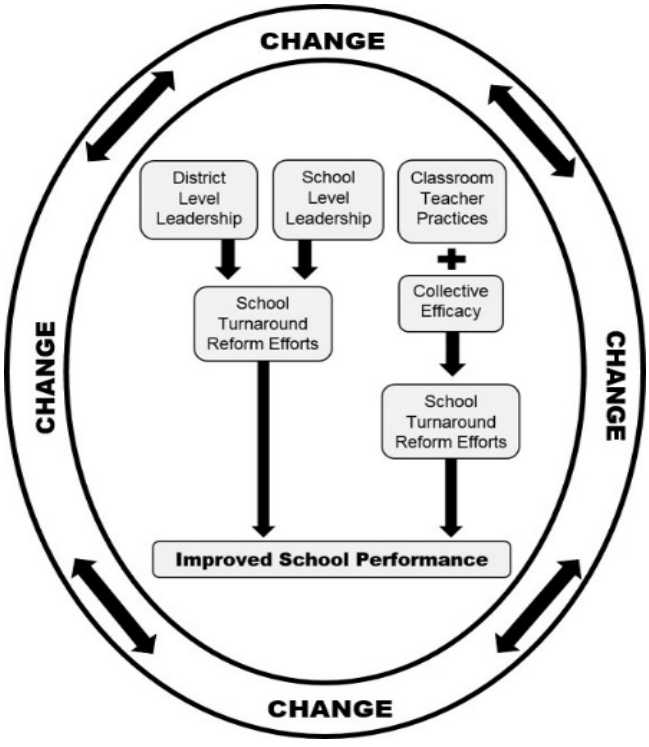

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of turnaround reform factors

Definition of Terms

Accountability. Holding schools and districts responsible for the mastery of state objectives, as measured by state assessments, including English language learners (ELL) and special education students (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, 2010).

Accreditation Rating. Designation that indicates whether a school has met overall benchmarks in English, math, history and science within the Commonwealth of Virginia (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). As mandated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), each state must set benchmarks in reading and math that reduce the proficiency gap between the highest and lowest performing school (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The minimum benchmark schools and school divisions were mandated to achieve under NCLB (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). This benchmark is no longer used since the approval of Virginia's flexibility waiver by the U.S. Department of Education.

Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools. A Title I school among the lowest five percent in a district or a high school with a graduation rate of less than 60 percent (Virginia Department of Education, 2014).

Lead Turnaround Partners. Lead Partners are nonprofit organizations or units of central offices on contract with the district central office or state to turn around schools. Lead Turnaround Partners work to change behaviors of practitioners and stakeholders in ways that produce better learning results for students by maintaining a laser focus on student data. LTPs perform a thorough assessment of school needs and assets to develop a

comprehensive and sustainable reform plan that accounts for the unique needs of the school. LTPs monitor implementation of the plan to ensure it is implemented well (Mass Insight, 2010)

Leadership. The process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization (Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, Elliott, & Porter, 2007).

Priority Schools. Schools that have been identified to implement an improvement plan based on their students' performance in reading and mathematics, including graduation rates in the case of high schools (VDOE, 2014).

Report Card. Data provided online for each school and school division within the commonwealth. Student achievement data is included by subject and grade as well as by subgroup (Virginia Department of Education, 2014).

School Reform. Research-based initiatives implemented to improve student outcomes (Johns Hopkins University, 2014).

Standards of Learning Assessment (SOL). Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools describe the commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K–12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education, and driver education (VDOE, 2017).

Transformation. Transforming leadership occurs when "one or more persons engage with each other in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns, 1978).

Transformation Model. Replace the principal and improve the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies (VDOE, 2009).

Turnaround. A documented, quick, dramatic, and sustained change in the performance of an organization (Kowal, Hassel, & Rhim, 2007).

Turnaround Model. Replace the principal, screen existing school staff and rehire no more than half the teachers; adopt a new governance structure; and improve the school through curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies (VDOE, 2009).

Conclusion

Pass rates continue to fall on the Virginia Standards of Learning test (VDOE, 2018). LTPs have a state and local contractual agreement to improve academic outcomes among elementary school students who attend priority schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. To date, no studies were found that focused on services provided by the LTPs during their collaboration with teachers and administrators in priority schools, which led to the improvement in SOL reading scores among students in grades three through five. The purpose of this study is to identify school-based services that Lead Turnaround Partners provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores. The results of this study provide LTPs and turnaround leaders with an opportunity to reflect on the decision-making process and how it relates to professional development, programs, and school improvement plans. Findings from this study are also provide insight to leaders of change to consistently evaluate best practices used when influencing organizational change.

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 represents the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 will encompass a review of the school reform literature, with a focus on school turnaround. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the research in four parts, including selection of the participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the results. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, recommendations, and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School reform initiatives can clearly be seen with each presidential administration and the reauthorization of policy. Each reauthorization comes with mandates for states to implement to ensure that public education continues to focus on closing the achievement gap. Unfortunately, many of our nation's public schools continue to struggle with academic proficiency after years of ongoing school reform efforts, legislation, and judicial decisions (American Institutes for Research, 2010). In 2001, aggressive federal school reform accountability measures exposed achievement gaps among traditionally underserved students and their peers and spurred an important national dialogue on education improvement (USDOE, 2015). No Child Left Behind (2001) represented a significant step forward for our nation's children in many respects, particularly as it shined a light on where students were making progress and where they needed additional support, regardless of race, income, zip code, disability, home language, or background (Darrow, 2016). Schools that were consistently not making academic progress according to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) were designated as low-performing or in need of turnaround to improve their academic performance. Mass Insight (2007) defines turnaround as a dramatic, multidimensional change process at a chronically under-performing school. Peck and Reitzug (2013) note that turnaround refers to rapid, significant improvement in the academic achievement of persistently low-achieving schools. Turning around low-performing schools is paramount to the United States economy. The demand for a skilled and highly educated workforce able to compete in the global economy has placed public schools under immense pressure to raise student achievement (Schanzenbach, Boddy, Mumford, & Nantz, 2016). Providing every child with a high quality education to which they are entitled has become a topic of fierce debate, federal directives, and educational research.

School turnaround strategies mandated by the federal government are presently the only efforts for school reform that are coupled with financial commitments to assist with rapid implementation. Schools designated as chronically low-performing selected one of the four school reform models: transformation, turnaround, restart, or closure, and received financial support to fund school improvement efforts. Federal funding included Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants (SIGs) and Investing in Innovation (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). In January 2010 the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) released revised guidelines for use of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, a federal program designed to improve student achievement in persistently low achieving public schools (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The revised federal program is intended to significantly change the roles and responsibilities of the school, district, state, and partners. The revised federal guidance for the SIG program encourages the use of external partners to support and supplement the limited capacity of the schools and districts implementing the restart, turnaround, or transformation improvement models (USDOE, 2011). External partners have an extensive history of supporting improvement efforts in low-performing schools. The revised federal guidelines recognize the need for more comprehensive school reform partners. Such partners would guide the improvement efforts and address instruction, professional development, operations leadership, and the overall systems of both the school and the district (Corbett, 2011).

Organization of Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to investigate what school-based services were adopted and implemented in priority elementary schools that had a Lead Turnaround Partner. Chapter two will examine school reform with an emphasis on 21st-century school reform, school turnaround models, school turnaround, stages of school turnaround, state leadership, district leadership,

principal leadership, teachers, leadership, school conditions, climate and culture, change theory, partnership, and practices related to school turnaround with external partners.

Search Process

The literature review was conducted using the University of New England library's electronic databases, ProQuest, books, dissertations, web searches and peer reviewed journal articles to search for key terms. The key terms and phrases were: school reform, turnaround leadership, turnaround policies, transformation models, and lead turnaround partners. The publications were read and significant citations were identified and analyzed. Reading the peer reviewed journals led to identification of additional related works. Both empirical and qualitative literature was also reviewed.

Historical Perspective on School Reform

Sixty-four years ago, Brown v. Board of Education set in motion a series of legislative and judicial decisions to undo the effects of racial segregation, providing opportunities and support for children who had been denied both (Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher, & Kerr, 2004). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, passed during President Johnson's administration as part of the War on Poverty campaign, has been reauthorized eight times since 1965. The ESEA provided substantial funding to high poverty schools with the intent to create equal opportunities for all children to be successful. This was a change from the long standard of education being primarily the responsibility of state and local governments. The ESEA of 1965 also increased the presence of the federal government's interest in public education by providing funding, additional services, and personnel to schools (Paul, 2016).

A Nation at Risk

In 1981, the U.S. Department of Education created a National Commission on Excellence. The commission was tasked with conducting research on the current quality of education in the United States. The Nation at Risk report triggered a call to action by the U.S. federal government that led to an increase of educational reforms in the following decades. The Nation at Risk report suggested the United States was in danger of losing its preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation to competitors throughout the world (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report provided five specific recommendations that would guide educational reform as we know it today. The recommended reforms were organized into five main themes: Content, Standards and Expectations, Time, Teaching, Leadership, and Fiscal Support. The major school reform efforts since the influential 1983 report contributed to school turnaround models as we know them today (The Wallace Foundation, 2011).

Standards-Based Reform

The recommendations from the A Nation at Risk report set the states in motion to standardize the expectations for all students. The standards movement, sometimes called standard-based reform, has been ongoing in the United States (Hamilton, Stecher & Yuan, 2008). After the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), there appeared a great deal of literature accusing public schools of academic laxity and calling for a more rigorous academic curriculum and higher academic standards in public schools (Miyamoto, 2008). In response, over the years there have been three influential documents focused on improving public education: AMERICA 2000: An Education Strategy announcement by George H. W. Bush in 1991; Goals 2000, enacted by the Clinton administration in 1994; and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the

legislation reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act by the George W. Bush administration. These three documents contain the common assumption that higher academic standards are necessary for the nation and that achievement tests should be used to ascertain the level of academic performance of students and schools.

Early Indicators of School Reform Success

In the late 1960s student achievement was measured by the school and home environment. In 1966, the work of James Coleman and his colleagues clarified the effective school's public policy issue by bringing into sharp contrast the question of whether student achievement derives more from the home from which children have come or the schools to which they are sent (Coleman, 1966). His findings proposed that children from poor families and homes, lacking the prime conditions or values to support education, could not learn, regardless of what the school did (Association for Effective Schools, 1996). Edmonds and others refused to accept Coleman's report as conclusive, although they acknowledged that family background does indeed make a difference (Association of Effective Schools, 1996). Edmonds and other researchers conducted a study to look at achievement data from schools in several major cities where student populations were composed of those from poverty backgrounds. The study concluded that there were schools where poor children were learning. However, the research could not definitively ascertain why some schools made a difference and others did not. The research, however, did note correlates of information characteristics that are now referred to as Effective School Research (Lezotte, 1999). Edmonds believed that the implementation of the following correlates—clear school mission, high expectation for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn and student time on task, safe and orderly environment, and home school relations—would result in an effective

school for all students. These distinct characteristics are the only set of research identified constructs to cause the school as a whole to improve (Lezotte, 1999).

School Choice

The School Choice program gained momentum in the 1990s and empowered students and parents with options that in turn raised the standard of education (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). Several states adopted legislation designed to provide more parents with choice in the schools their children attend. Many states have enabled the creation of public school choice programs and charter schools (Ziebarth, 2001), both of which are intended to increase the public school options available to parents. State policies may also provide public support for parents who send their children to private schools (U.S. Department of Education 2000d), and all states now permit homeschooling (Lines, 2001). School Choice introduced a philosophy of competition and a belief that students should have compelling options for education. These ideas have carried through to the development of the four current turnaround models and the use of charter, private and public contracts, and district providers to serve as turnaround operators (The Wallace Foundation, 2011).

Comprehensive School Reform

The Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Program began in 1998 and was authorized as Title I, Part F of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was signed into law on January 8, 2002 (USDOE). The movement attempted to bring some consistency to school reform by requiring schools to implement a comprehensive school reform program. The focus of the CSR Program is school-wide change, particularly in Title I schools, where there is the greatest need to substantially improve student achievement (USDOE). A key feature of the program is that it provides incentives for schools to develop comprehensive reform programs based on

scientific research and effective practices. These reforms must help all children to meet challenging state academic content and achievement standards. Whether they use a nationally available approach or develop their program locally, these schools must coherently integrate the eleven components of reform. In 2003, Congress appropriated $233.5 million to support comprehensive reforms in schools eligible for Title I funds. CSR funds help finance the initial implementation of comprehensive reforms that are coordinated with and sustained by all the resources available to the school, including federal, state, local, and private resources.

A study conducted by Slavin (2008) examined CSR's effectiveness by focusing on implementation of the reform models. There are four CSR models included in this study: Accelerated Schools, Core Knowledge, Direct Instruction, and Success for All. These models were chosen because they have been widely selected by schools throughout the nation, and because they differ from each other significantly (Slavin, 2008). The study found that the implementation of a CSR model has had modest, if any, effect on student achievement. However, the study indicates that very few schools using these four models have fully implemented them. If these circumstances also apply to other models and their implementation, it is not surprising that CSR has had little effect (Slavin, 2008). Other studies point to a need for district representation at all stages of the CSR process. For example, Bodilly and Berends (1999), Cook, Habib, Phillips, Settersten, Shagle, and Degirmencioglu (1999), Muncey and McQuillan (1996), and Stringfield, Datnow and Ross (1998) have all reported that district support and guidance played a key role in successful implementation of CSR efforts. Districts can be especially important at the earliest stages of the CSR process by providing information about alternative CSR designs (Bodilly, 1998), and by providing input into the pace, direction, and form of change (Desimone, 2002).

No Child Left Behind

Comprehensive School Reform is an important component of the No Child Left Behind Act. Under the leadership of President George W. Bush and former Secretary of Education Rod Paige, No Child Left Behind was created. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was landmark education legislation that passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support. The NCLB law grew out of concern that the American education system was no longer internationally competitive, and significantly increased the federal role in holding schools responsible for the academic progress of all students (Klein, 2015). Specifically, NCLB put a special focus on ensuring that states and schools boost the performance of certain groups of students, such as English language learners, students in special education, and poor and minority children whose achievement on average trails their peers. Under NCLB, states must test students in reading and math in third through eighth grades and once in high school (Klein, 2015). The law also requires states to ensure that their teachers are highly qualified, which generally means they have a bachelor's degree in the subject they are teaching and state certification (Klein, 2015).

NCLB compliance is a choice each state made individually (Klein, 2015). States did not have to comply with the new requirements, although by not complying, the state risked losing federal Title I financial support. NCLB federal funding is tied to two requirements that directly affect student achievement and low-performing schools (USDOE, 2012). The first requirement specifies that states must adopt a single statewide accountability system to document that all students are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) over a twelve month period. The second component specifies that school districts must ensure that research-based technical assistance is provided to schools that fail to meet their AYP goals for two consecutive years (USDOE, 2012). Many states accept federal funding to support education; therefore, the states are obligated to

comply with the outlined provisions or mandates of the federal government. The most recent reauthorization in December 2015 included revisions and renaming from No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds Act or (ESSA). The Act's goal continues to focus on improving educational opportunities and outcomes for children from lower-income families and has remained constant throughout its many revisions (Roper & Rossi, 2018).

NCLB has been criticized for growing the federal footprint in K–12 education, and for relying too heavily on standardized math and reading tests (Klein, 2015). Education advocates claim the law has been underfunded. By fiscal year 2007, for example, annual funding for the main NCLB program, Title I, was supposed to rise to $25 billion. However, in fiscal year 2015, Title I received approximately $14.5 billion, less than half of what was projected (USDOE).

The Virginia Accountability System

On February 23, 2012, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) approved Virginia's ESEA flexibility application, submitted to the United States Education Department for review and approval (VDOE, 2012). On August 29, 2012, the USDOE praised Virginia for implementing new and more rigorous college-and career-ready mathematics assessments and acknowledged that it had approved Virginia's revised AMO methodology. Once the methodology was applied to the data, USDOE determined the resulting AMOs were not sufficiently ambitious to close the achievement gap and did not meet the ESEA flexibility requirement that subgroups that are farther behind demonstrate greater academic gains over time (VDOE, 2013). As a result, the Superintendent of Public Instruction proposed to the VBOE at its September 27, 2012, meeting an alternate revised methodology for establishing AMOs for mathematics for accountability years 2013–2014 through 2017–2018 that would meet ESEA flexibility requirements (VDOE, 2013).

On October 25, 2012, the VBOE approved the alternative revised AMO methodology for mathematics, which would also be used to establish reading targets for accountability years 2013–2014 through 2017–2018 based on new and more rigorous reading assessments that were to be administered for the first time in 2012–2013. On March 5, 2013, Virginia received final USDOE approval for the alternative revised AMO methodology adopted by the VBOE at its October 25, 2012 meeting (VDOE, 2013). With the new AMOs adopted the VDOE continued to support the school turnaround initiative by implementing the intervention model from USDOE as outlined in the *Handbook in Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* (Perlman & Redding, 2011), published by the federal government through the VDOE Office of School Improvement (VDOEOSI). Presently, schools in Virginia failing to meet accreditation criteria are identified as Priority Schools (VDOE, 2012).

Title I schools that are identified as Priority Schools are required to develop a Plan of Improvement (POI), which must contain three mandated strategies (VDOE, 2012). First, the school division must choose one of the federal strategies for turnaround. The federal strategies for improving student performance in low-performing Title I schools include the following four models: restart, school closure, transformation, and turnaround (VDOE, 2012).

According to the VDOE (2012) the restart model entails converting a school or closing and reopening a school under a charter school operator, a management organization, or an education management organization. The school closure model requires closing a failing school and enrolling those students in other high-achieving schools in the division (USDOE, 2012). The transformation model requires replacing the principal, using a rigorous evaluation system for teachers and principals, providing high-quality professional development, and implementing rewards and incentives aimed at retaining quality staff (USDOE, 2012). The turnaround model is

the most commonly chosen strategy, replacing the principal and giving the new administrator the flexibility to implement new approaches to improve student achievement, including changes to staffing, calendars, schedules, and budgeting. The turnaround model also includes adopting competencies to measure effectiveness of staff, screening and rehiring no more than 50 percent of the existing staff, and hiring new staff. Under this strategy, implementing financial incentives, increasing opportunities for promotion and career growth, and providing more flexible work conditions are put into place to recruit, place, and retain staff. School divisions must also provide professional development aligned with the school's instructional program to enable teachers to successfully implement the reform strategies (USDOE, 2012). According to VDOE (2012), another focal point of the turnaround model is the intense use of data. Schools in the turnaround process are required to use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research based as well as vertically aligned with the state's academic standards. Data are also to be used to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students and to provide social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

The second mandate strategy for POI requires divisions to contract with a state-approved turnaround partner to assist with implementation of a federal improvement model. The Commonwealth of Virginia refers to the contracted entity as the Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP). Lead Turnaround Partners are identified from a list of VDOE-approved vendors then interviewed and contracted by a team from the individual school and overall division (VDOE, 2013). Each of the schools identified as Priority is required by the federal government to use funds from the School Improvement Grants to contract with one LTP to implement all requirements of the VSDOE turnaround principles. A list of approved LTP companies is generated yearly by the VDOE. Lead Turnaround Partners' contracts are based on the number of students in the school

and services provided. Lead Turnaround Partners' contracts can go as high as $750,000.00 per school year for one school.

The third mandated strategy of POI requires school divisions to work with a VDOE Contractor (VDOEOSI, 2017), in addition to the LTPs. The VDOE Lead Partner (LP) Contractor's role is to conduct academic reviews and develop, implement, and monitor intervention strategies. School divisions are required to pay for these services from their local school funds. The cost to the division for the VDOE Contractor is $20,000.00 for the first school and $10,000.00 for each additional school within a division.

For example, if a division has three schools in priority status, the division would contract for $20,000.00 for the first school and $10,000.00 for each of the other two. Total cost in this example, for one year, would be $40,000.00. Services for the VDOE contractors are paid from local funds. Designated Priority Schools are required to remain in the school improvement process for three years, even if they attain accreditation after one or two years. Virginia identified 36 Priority Schools for the first time in the 2012–2013 school year using the 2011 standards of learning assessments scores. Thirteen of the original Priority Schools exited the program after the first year of implementation, not remaining in the program the full three years as required by the guidelines. Of the 23 schools that remained (out of the original 36) on the priority list, ten exited the second year after meeting AYP requirements, six exited after their third year, and seven remained on the list as of 2015–2016 school year. The federal government requires states to identify schools in the bottom 15% according to student performance on end of year state assessments. As schools exit priority status, new schools are identified to replace them. Between 2013 and 2015, 28 new schools were added and currently remain on the priority list. A total of 64 schools in Virginia went through state mandated turnaround reform between 2012 and

2015. To date there are 35 schools currently identified as priority in the Commonwealth of Virginia (VDOE, 2015).

School Turnaround

Turnaround can be conceptualized as a condition or situation, process, or a consequence for academic practitioners both inside and outside of the education sector (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). According to research, although the federal government has made school turnaround a top priority and funneled millions of dollars into school improvement grants, results do not show the process to be a consistently effective strategy (Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Player and Katz (2016) voiced their concern that since the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program received significant financial backing, little is known about how to effectively turn around low-performing schools and whether planned and structured turnaround is even possible. Has the investment in money and resources been the catalyst for the change needed to turn around schools? Several studies have noted that there is little evidence that the federal government's models, turnaround, closure, transformation, and restart have consistent and dependable results (Favero & Rutherford, 2013; Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Finnigan, Daly, and Stewart (2012) found in their research that most schools did not improve in the timeframe mandated by NCLB but moved into the deepest sanctions of the In Need of Improvement status. Even with little evidence that turnaround school reform is effective, it is still a high priority in federal education policy, according to Favero and Rutherford (2013). Peck and Reitzug (2013) also voiced their concern that turnaround reforms, as presently implemented, are based on promotionally hyped dreams as much as on research-based, concrete hopes. Goals?

A two-year study conducted by Player and Katz (2016) found that there were statistically significant changes in student achievement in Ohio schools participating in the turnaround

process. It was also noted in their findings that although there was a positive trajectory in student achievement, schools continued to lag behind the other schools in their districts and still well behind the other schools in the state. Sustainability of achievement was not evident. Hamilton et al. (2014) similarly found that although some case studies have shown an increase in student achievement in schools that have undergone turnaround reform, there is a lack of evidence of the sustainability of improvement. Peck and Reitzug (2013) concluded that significant academic achievement in low-achieving schools was not best accomplished through rapid, intensive interventions as suggested by the term *turnaround* in today's educational usage, but rather by slow and steady growth over time. As further evidence that time is needed to improve student achievement, Peck and Reitzug (2013) pointed out that the time needed for turnaround to be successful created its own conundrum, as modern society does not have time to perfect the turnaround reform movement. Yet, for the sake of too many urban schools and students, educational leaders and policy makers cannot allow the turnaround movement to fail.

Turnaround Policies

Federal and state policies place challenging demands on U.S. school districts to realize ambitious achievement goals (Honing, 2013). School turnaround has implemented some of the most aggressive school reform policies with the intent of accomplishing quick gains in school improvement for chronically low-performing schools (USDOE). While public policy can make people do things, it cannot make people do those things well (Petrilli, 2016). For example, federal policy makers do not run schools; they merely write laws and regulations telling school districts what principals and teachers ought to do. Second, schooling is a complex, highly personal endeavor, which means that what happens at the level of the teacher and student is the most critical factor in separating failure from success. In education that is a vast distance

between policy and success (Petrilli, 2016). According to Hassel (2014) policy is what gives states the leverage to change what happens in schools so millions of students in low-achieving schools can have a better future. Policy at the federal level continues to dictate school reform efforts at the state level. Policy is an explicit representation of the expectations for all involved in the educational process. It also communicates that this is the expectation from the state and it provides districts with credibility to parents, educators, and citizens about the states' priorities (Dewees, 2016).

The Obama administration's unprecedented investment in education reform has significantly, if temporarily, expanded the federal role in education (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). From the outset, President Obama saw Race to the Top (RttT) as a way to induce state-level policymaking that aligned with his education objectives on college readiness, the creation of new data systems, teacher effectiveness, and persistently low-performing schools (Howell, 2015). The sheer size of the investment has put the federal government in a position to mandate policy change and to set guidelines for the turnaround strategies of states and local educational agencies (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). Policy provides the framework, funding, and legal backing for school turnaround. The federal government's attempt to address these constructs through policy is evident through the official school turnaround reform models.

A study conducted by William Howell determined that RttT has had a substantial impact on education policy across the United States, confirming observations by many participating states (Howell, 2015). Consistent with Howell's findings, evidence suggests that by strategically deploying funds to cash-strapped states and massively increasing the public profile of a controversial set of education policies, the Obama Administration managed to stimulate reforms that had stalled in state legislatures (Howell, 2015). Specifically, RttT was designed to encourage

higher state standards, create new data systems, improve teacher effectiveness, increase college readiness, stimulate charter-school expansion, and strengthen low-performing schools (Howell, 2015).

Turnaround Partners

In response to the recession that began in 2007, the U.S. Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Pub. Law 111-5). This legislation included $3 billion for School Improvement Grants (SIG), one of the Obama administration's signature programs and one of the largest federal government investments in an education grant program. The SIG program awarded grants to states that agreed to implement one of four school intervention models—transformation, turnaround, restart, or closure—in their lowest-performing schools. Each of the models prescribed specific practices designed to improve student outcomes, including outcomes for high-need students such as English language learners (ELLs) (U.S. Department of Education 2010a).

In January 2010, the USDOE released revised guidance for use of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, a federal grant program designed to improve student achievement in persistently low-achieving public schools. The revised guidelines seek long-term systemic and comprehensive solutions to change how schools and districts operate and educate students. The revised federal guidance for the SIG program also encourages the use of external partners to support and supplement the limited capacity at the schools and districts implementing the restart, turnaround, or transformation improvement models (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). External partners have an extensive history of supporting improvement efforts in low-performing schools, but both the revised federal guidance and guidance from many states recognize the need for more comprehensive school reform partners (Corbett, 2011). Such

partners would guide the improvement effort and address instruction, professional development, operations, and the overall systems of both the school and the district (Corbett, 2011).

There are numerous definitions of "Lead Turnaround Partner" being used by states and education organizations selling improvement services. While the specific contract requirements, autonomies, and responsibilities of the LTPs vary by state, the idea behind the LTPs is consistent with the definition established by Mass Insight Education and Research Institute's School Turnaround Group, which states: Lead Partners are nonprofit organizations or units of central office on contract with the district central office or state to turn around schools. Lead Partners sign a 3–5 year performance contract for student achievement with the district or state (Corbett, 2011).

The LTP concept was established to help schools and districts with limited capacity implement sustainable and scalable school improvement efforts. According to LeFloch and Barbour (2014), partnerships with external experts can seem like a critical lifeline. Education specialists experienced implementing turnaround strategies help schools identify and integrate the myriad complex elements of school improvement plans to give them a better chance to succeed. Federal education policy recognizes the role of such experts. Guidance for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, for example, indicates that schools awarded funds may partner with external providers for technical expertise on matters as varied as data evaluation, professional development, and school culture (U.S. Department of Education). Some states—including Illinois and Virginia—have gone further, making SIG awards contingent on securing such a partnership. In some cases, schools are matched with experts who have just the right skill set for the school's needs, are adept at developing rapport, and have adequate time and resources to support the school. The school staff is ready for change and welcomes the expert's

involvement. In these cases, the partnership can help improve the school's culture and climate, strengthen community connections, and restore school pride. In other cases, a partnership becomes just one more in a series of failed attempts to turn around a history of low performance. The way school improvement partnerships are conceived, established, and tended is critical to their success (LeFloch & Barbour, 2014).

State Leadership

Mass Insight (2007) research contends that a coherent, comprehensive state turnaround initiative would incorporate three key elements: Changing Conditions, Building Capacity, and Clustering for Support. State governments must take strong action even in strong local control states. They must act in concert with districts and outside providers. While states may have the responsibility to ensure equitable intervention across district lines, they clearly do not have the capacity to implement turnaround on the ground at the scale of the need (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007). Their role is to require fundamental, not incremental change; establish operating conditions that support, rather than undermine the desired change; add new capacity in high leverage school and district roles and establish turnaround partners; and galvanize local capacity where it is currently trapped in dysfunctional settings (Calkins et al., 2007). Peurach and Neumerski (2015) agree that while state education agencies have the primary responsibility for identifying turnaround schools, local education agencies are to determine specific turnaround strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Research conducted by the Wallace Foundation (2011) noted that states can focus on developing scalable solutions to human capital and operator capacity issues, creating conditions for success through policy change, assessing the quality of turnaround providers and operators, and investing in the IT and accountability infrastructure that underpins turnaround success.

State Practices

The Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) turnaround process for low-performing schools provides a model that depicts strong state control in the school turnaround process. The State Education Agency (SEA) is managing the School Improvement Grant program through the Office of School Improvement (OSI). There are many promising practices that could be used in any environment. The practices are separated into three main categories: Communication, Hiring and Staffing, and State Oversight and Assistance (Corbett, 2011). The Virginia Model includes an Internal Lead Partner (ILP), a staff member of the division who oversees and manages implementation at the local level. The ILP is also responsible for acting as the liaison between school leadership and an external Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) that is hired to guide the improvement process. Together, the ILP, representative(s) from the external LTP, and all school leadership form the local team in charge of making decisions and driving the implementation of the selected improvement model (VDOE, 2012).

In 2010, Massachusetts ambitiously initiated a series of reform efforts to improve their lowest performing schools. The Massachusetts Department of Education published an analysis of school and district practices, system policies, and use of resources contributing to successful turnaround efforts in their lowest achieving schools (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010). After an extensive review of the findings from the study, four key practices emerged as having significant impact on turning schools around. The practices are:

1. Getting the right leaders and teachers in place.
2. Establishing a safe and orderly environment for learning.

3. Employing intentional and deliberate practices and data-driven systems to provide students with tiered instruction, improve teachers' instruction, and cultivate a community of practice with shared responsibility for the achievement of all students.
4. Organizing district staff and resources to support turnaround schools. This means the district must strategically allocate resources toward direct instruction and support for students (AIR, 2010).

District Leadership

District leaders often overlook or do not fully recognize the critical role they play in providing schools with the support structures necessary to bring about the type of change that turnaround requires (Mass Insight, 2010). Despite the relatively light policy focus on the district's role in school turnaround, it is easy to see the critical gatekeeper role a district plays in determining a school's success. The district has influence over many key resources essential to turnaround, including school leadership, instructional quality, personnel policies, budget, assessments, and curriculum. A school turnaround initiative will face an uphill battle if a district is not ready to provide a range of support in these areas (Player, Hambrick-Hitt, & Robinson, 2014). U.S. school district central offices can lead for better school performance, but the current work practices and capacities of central office staff are generally ill-equipped for supporting better student outcomes (Honing, 2013). According to Baroody (2011), successful school turnaround requires district turnaround. The district must implement fundamental changes and provide support for schools (Baroody, 2011). AIR (2010) suggests that schools that do not have district support will have a much more difficult time turning a school around when working in isolation. AIR notes that although more research is needed, there appears to be a positive, synergistic effect on district and school partnership to support school transformation (AIR,

2010). Honing (2013) suggests the experience of districts pioneering such efforts indicate that central office transformation should involve creating partnerships between principals and executive-level central office staff, developing and aligning performance-orientated central office services to support district-wide instructional improvement, and establish superintendent and other central office leadership that will help staff and build their capacity for better performance. This emphasis on central offices reflects reams of research and experience that show that without central office leadership, reform efforts lumber or fail at single schools and across districts (Abe, Weinstock, Chan, Meyers, Gerdeman, & Brandt, 2015).

District Practices

Research underscores the importance of the external environment, especially district support and stability of leadership, in the process of change (Bodilly & Berends, 1999; Glennan, 1998; Fullan & Hargreaves 1991). Kowal and Ableidinger (2011) provide specific actions that districts can take that build on the experience base in other sectors. District leaders should start with known success factors, monitor turnaround schools frequently and intimately, and act on early indicators of success or failure. Finally, Kowal and Ableidinger (2011) suggest collecting mountains of data and narrowing to the most predictive over time. Federal funding requirements from NCLB and RttT specifically require the use of data to drive decisions in the turnaround process. Districts must also provide a process for documenting actions and practices that are essential elements in the success or failure of turnaround (Dewees, 2016). Districts that want to increase the odds of successful school turnaround should take an active leadership and support role (Steiner & Hassel, 2011).

Principal Leadership

While district practices such as using data to create school improvement plans that emphasize school-wide achievement goals based on students' learning needs and using evidence-based instruction to improve student performance are fundamentally important to the turnaround process, strong effective leadership is an even more critical factor in leading school turnaround efforts (McKinney, Labat, & Labat, 2015). A principal's leadership is contingent on their ability to set high expectations anchored in goals for all stakeholders (McKinney, Labat, & Labat, 2015). Their behaviors and habits are the catalysts for transformation (McKinney et al., 2015). Burns (1978) describes the transformational leader as one who raises the consciousness of followers via inspiration and mobility. He claimed that meeting the needs of subordinates helps leaders exert influence over their followers. Meyers and Hambrick-Hitt (2017) called transformational leaders change agents who could move and inspire followers beyond their known limits. Collins (2016) contended that transformational leaders are holders of a larger vision in which stakeholders identify and align themselves. Furthermore, they claim that transformational leaders are not confined to the limits of the organization. Instead, they expand the organization to meet the possibilities of the vision. Carlson (2018) went beyond the idea that transformational leaders hold vision—they are creative, visionary, interactive, empowering, and passionate. A school leader who possesses these characteristics is transformational in nature (Rowland & Higgs, 2013). Furthermore, they have a strong capacity to monitor student progress and therefore increase student performance (Gilligan, 2018).

Transformation of any organization relies on the strength of its leader. The school leader, or principal, establishes the school culture, defines the roles and expectations for all stakeholders, and creates plans to enable the smoothness of the operation. Cucchiara, Rooney, and Robertson-

Kraft (2013) noted that since schools were run by a provider or principal, the provider is the catalyst that sets other supports for school improvement. How a principal leads the school matters, especially through the turnaround process. The school administrator's decisions and practices have a profound impact on teachers, students, and the community. Whitaker (2003) states he is convinced the principal is the filter for whatever happens in a school. Although a leadership change may be required or warranted in some instances, simply changing the principal has not been shown to guarantee the desired results if the new principal does not have the underlying competencies, skills, and strategies needed to effect the desired changes (USDOE, 2004). While research on turnaround principals is sparse, Kowal and Hassel (2011) report that across industries as many as 70% of successful turnarounds begin with change at the top. Player, Hambrick-Hitt, and Robinson, (2014) agree that turnaround schools must be staffed with leaders who are willing and able to make essential changes. Chan (2013) found that a change of principal can transform a declining school, based on a turnaround case in Hong Kong, but the effect of these leadership actions differs according to actual school situations.

Principal Leadership Competencies

Evidence collected over the past 30 years suggests that effective school leaders significantly influence student learning and other aspects of school performance (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). One of the most challenging barriers in education today is identifying school leaders who can successfully lead turnarounds of persistently low-achieving public schools. Evidence from states and districts across the country suggests that the traditional principal pool is already stretched to capacity and likely cannot supply enough leaders to fix failing schools (Kowal & Hassel, 2011). Effective principals are an essential element in improving student achievement and learning (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Steiner et al.,

2008). Therefore, awareness of the competencies and actions of the turnaround principal may assist decision makers in selecting and preparing successful leaders. Kowal and Ableidinger (2011) suggest that competencies of successful turnaround leaders differ from those in already high performing organizations. According to their research, there are four competencies that increase a turnaround leader's chances of success. These include:

1) Driving for results—the leader's strong desire to achieve outstanding results and the task-oriented actions required for success
2) Influencing for results—motivating others and influencing their thinking and behavior to obtain results. Turnaround leaders cannot accomplish change alone, but instead must rely on the work of others
3) Engaging in problem-solving—including analysis of data to inform decisions; making clear, logical plans that people can follow; and ensuring a strong connection between school learning goals and classroom activity
4) Showing confidence to lead—staying visibly focused, committed, and self-assured despite the barrage of personal and professional attacks common during turnarounds.

Teacher Leadership

Research tells us that teaching quality is the most important school-based influence on student learning (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005), and that school leadership is the second most important influence on student learning (Leithwood, et al., 2004). In turnaround schools, where the systemic conditions do not yet exist for quality teaching and student learning, the demands on leadership are great, as systems that ensure all teachers can teach and all students can learn must be established. From a turnaround perspective, schools cannot afford to overlook teachers as a powerfully transformative source of leadership for school

improvement (Lastinger Center, 2017). School improvement will depend on teachers who implement the changes needed to achieve high levels of academic performance for every student. Teachers in turnaround schools need to be actively engaged in all aspects of the turnaround process. Margolis and Huggins (2012) affirm how the unprecedented demands on the educational system require teacher leaders who can help schools enact ambitious, classroom-level reforms and that teacher leaders who can help all teachers engage in classroom-based inquiry are central to the success of schools in helping every child learn.

Teachers have a unique vantage point that can ultimately move change forward or grind it to a halt. Teachers who are engaged in the process of developing a school's improvement plan will lead to greater buy-in and a deeper understanding of the decisions being made. These outcomes will in turn increase the likelihood of successful implementation of school improvement efforts. While there is limited research linking teacher leadership actions to student learning outcomes, there is ample evidence of teachers exerting influence in ways that help create conditions for effective teaching and learning (Blase, & Blase, 2000).

In 2010, a study by Van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, and Holland noted that ethnic minority students are at risk for school failure and show a heightened susceptibility to negative teacher expectancy effects. The findings suggest that implicit measures of teacher prejudice have a negative impact on student achievement. The study determined that due to the implicit nature of the prejudiced behaviors, they were most probably subtle and unintentional; nonetheless, the students perceived teacher expectations as negative, had reduced levels of motivation, resulting in lower achievement scores on standardized tests. According to Haycock (1998), the key variable for the success of at-risk students was teacher quality. Education Trust

conducted a study to identify the characteristics of a high performing school. Their study found that supportive teachers and principals are also associated with higher academic performance.

Teacher Practices

Tomlinson and Javius (2012) identify seven principles for *teaching up*. These principles were developed to increase performance in settings where students are placed in lower performing classes. If implemented, the researchers purport that the principles will create classrooms that give students equal access to excellence. The principles include accepting that human differences are not only normal but also desirable. To increase learning teachers must develop a growth mind-set, and work to understand students' cultures, interests, needs, and perspectives. Teaching up requires that teachers create a base of rigorous learning opportunities, while understanding that students come to the classroom with varied points of entry into a curriculum and move through it at different rates. Additional principles are creating flexible classroom routines and procedures that attend to learner needs and support rigorous instruction by being an analytical practitioner (Tomlinson & Javius, 2012). According to Lane, Unger, and Morando-Rhim (2013) in turnaround situations it is especially important to have data driven systems to guide intentional and deliberate practices to provide students with tiered instruction, improve teachers' instruction, and cultivate a community of practice with shared responsibility for the achievement of all students.

School Culture

School culture is the "underground stream of values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals," built up over time, that influence daily behavior and actions of everyone at the school and set the context for student learning (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 1). At any school, a positive environment of respect and trust is key to enabling the teamwork needed to solve problems and meet

challenges. At a persistently low-achieving school, defeat and pessimism have likely become entrenched. A negative culture "smothers" low achieving schools as an atmosphere of neglect, dysfunction, and disappointment takes the oxygen from efforts to improve (Peterson & Deal, 1998). A turnaround culture has the additional dimension of fusing strong community cohesion with an academic press. The task is to sustain an intensity that challenges and supports students to aim higher, work harder, and realize the satisfaction of accomplishment. Doing so requires that the school's community, staff, and students are engaged, collaboratively, in the turnaround work.

Building a positive culture starts at the top. The school's leaders, including those leading the culture shift, need to embody, model, and overtly talk about the values and keep everyone focused on the pivotal urgency of improving student learning. Decisions and actions made by the school leader impact the school's culture and its ability to turn around student achievement.

Cucchiara et al. (2013) hypothesized that the working conditions in turnaround schools in early implementation have implications for the task of turning around low-performing schools. Finnegan et al. (2012) determined an administrator's effectiveness is linked to being able to understand the important elements of practice and develop underlying beliefs to support those practices to improve organizational performance. Holme and Rangel (2012) identified the structures of internal accountability put into place by the school leader, which contribute to a relatively stable environment, as being a shared sense of norms, goals, expectations, and procedures. School culture depends on stability and consistency. Studies found that leadership turnover and unclear organizational goals weakened the organizational culture. Hamilton, Heilig, and Pazey (2014) also noted that the turnover of principals in low-performing schools caused instability in how reforms and various day-to-day academic and administrative practices were

handled. Under turnaround reform that stability is severely threatened by principal and teacher attrition (Bennett, 2012; Cucchiara et al., 2013; Favero & Rutherford, 2013; Holme & Rangel, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Whether voluntary or forced, movement among the staff, and the replacement of teachers and principals contributes to the instability and low morale of the organization.

Conclusion

Smarick (2010) notes that despite years of experience and great expenditures of time, money, and energy, educators still lack basic information about which tactics will make a struggling school excellent. Trujillo and Renée (2012) believe that turning around failing schools requires a collaborative, community-driven effort that has a real focus on teaching and learning and is supported by sustained funding and wrap-around services that help students and their families. Even those researchers who are in support of school turnaround suggest that no single model or strategy can succeed in reforming a school (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010). Invariably, improvements occur when multiple elements are in place, including strong school leadership, links to parents and the community, development of teachers' professional capacity, a safe and stimulating learning climate, and instructional guidance and materials (Bryk et al., 2010).

While some lessons can be learned from studying how LTPs have tackled SIG-funded school improvement efforts to date and how states and districts have selected and supported those LTPs, it is important to note that there is desperately little information about which providers and which matches between providers and schools actually contribute to drastic and sustainable student success (Corbett, 2011). At this point, there is a severe lack of information about the performance of the LTPs that do exist. Some LTPs have their own data on successful

past improvement efforts, but none have enough comparable and objective information about their success with schools and students, under the revised federal SIG program, to inform states', districts', and schools' choices (Corbett, 2011).

The Institute for Education Sciences (IES) is currently researching the SIG program through three different studies including: a multiyear review of case study states' SIG implementation; an impact study of Recovery Act programs, including SIG; and an evaluation of Race to the Top and SIG implementation (United States General Accountability Office, 2011). Additional research recommendations include the use of LTPs and how best to support LTP partnerships; additional research that focuses specifically on the LTP field is needed as well.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In 2011, the revised federal guidance for the SIG program encouraged the use of external partners to support and supplement the limited capacity at the schools and districts implementing the restart, turnaround, or transformation improvement models (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The VDOE mandated that the lowest five percent of Title I schools designated priority select an LTP to collaboratively work with to improve student achievement. This study examined a selected subgroup of the population of Title I elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia that have been identified for priority status in 2013–2014. The focus of this study was to identify school based services that the LTPs provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores. Overall student pass rates from 2014–2015 through 2015–2016 on the reading Virginia Standards of Learning assessments for cohorts of students in third through fifth grades were examined and compared with the Lead Turnaround Partner scope of work, mid-year and end of year reports provided to the Virginia Department of Education. The chapter is organized by the following sections: research question, research design, research procedures, (setting, participants, instrumentation, and data collection) and data analysis.

Research Design

The investigation was conducted as a program evaluation case study, utilizing Stufflebeam's (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017) Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) model. The CIPP theoretical model is a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of projects, programs, personnel and products, institutions, and systems. The model's configuration allows for its use in internal evaluations, self-evaluations, and contracted or

mandated external evaluations. The components of Stufflebeam's CIPP Evaluation Model are built on a set of identified core values that ground the evaluation process. The components and attributes described above show the CIPP Model's unique suitability as a framework for the evaluation of Title I elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia that have been identified for priority status in 2014–2015. Specifically, the model will assist in determining what literacy programs and services that emerged from the collaboration between LTPs and priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relate to the improvement, if any, of third through fifth grade students' Standard of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores.

Research Questions

Extensive scientific research is needed to truly validate the transformation and turnaround models, the use of LTPs, and to clarify which LTPs are succeeding at rapidly improving, persistently low-achieving schools (Corbett, 2011). Until that level of research is complete, it is important that LTPs, states, and districts examine and share lessons learned about which programs seem to work and which programs might be terminated (Corbett, 2011). Therefore, the following research questions prompted this study with LTPs and priority elementary schools in Virginia.

1. What factors led to the choice of the turnaround partners to be assigned to priority schools?
2. How were school-based services identified?
3. To what degree were the school-based services provided as documented by the stakeholder schools?
4. How did achievement in reading change over the life of the grant?

Research Question 1

The first research question addresses the context of the program. Context evaluation compares the goals and priorities of the program to assessed needs, problems, assets, and opportunities (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). It is essential to begin the evaluation with a clear understanding of Virginia's contract expectations for Lead Turnaround Partners' academic and support services for each school. Information will be extracted from archival documents that compare these expectations to the scope of work for academic and support services.

Research Question 2

The second research question addresses input evaluation. Input evaluation compares the program's strategy, design, and budget to those of critical competitors and to the targeted needs of its beneficiaries (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). Specifically, the question focuses on professional development services provided at each school. Information will be extracted from archival documents that identify school needs and services to be provided by the LTP.

Research Question 3

The third research question focuses on process evaluation. Process evaluation compares the design to the actual processes and cost of the program (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). The focus is to determine if program goals identified in the needs assessment are being implemented at each school. Information will be extracted from archival documents that identify professional development services provided by the LTP in the scope of work and quarterly reports.

Research Question 4

The fourth and final research question addresses product evaluation. Product evaluation compares the outcomes and side effects to the program's targeted needs as well as to the effort's assessed context, inputs, and processes (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). Product evaluation

determines if the program has met its goals and objectives (Spaulding, 2013). Analyzing archival data from third through fifth grade state reading assessments will be utilized as well as quarterly reports from stakeholders.

Research Procedures

The report of the research procedures includes a description of the setting, participants, instrumentation, and archival data collection. The components were strategically chosen and implemented to provide a firm foundation for the analysis and implementation of the collected data.

Participant Sites

In Virginia, priority schools comprising the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools must engage a state-approved turnaround partner to help design and implement school-reform models that meet state and federal requirements (VDOE, 2012). The sample for this study consists of two school divisions and four elementary schools that entered priority status the same year. All schools in the subgroup selected the USEOD Transformation Model. Three out of the four schools identified have more than 95% of the student population receiving free and reduced meals. The race percentage at each school includes a population of more than 88% minorities and the schools serve grades PK–5. The subgroup schools each have more than a 93% attendance rate. Student enrollment data for each elementary school were retrieved from the VDOE fall membership report, which was collected from each local school division on September 30th of each year.

Schools comprising the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools are labeled Priority and must engage a state approved turnaround partner to help design and implement school reform models that meet state and federal requirements (VDOE, 2014). Lead Turnaround

Partners were selected by submitting a Request for Proposal (RFP) that was announced by the Virginia Department of Education. The objective of the Lead Turnaround Partner RFP is to develop and implement an academic program for one or more of the core discipline areas of math, science, social studies, and language arts for students in persistently low-achieving public schools (Mass Insight, 2010). The VDOE has established a state contract of approved LTP providers that local and school boards may choose to contract for services. If a different LTP is desired, the selection must be by mutual agreement of the Department of Education and the local school board. The state appoints an experienced external educational consultant to work closely with a division team to monitor division and school level improvement efforts (USDOE, 2012).

Lead Turnaround Partners provided contractual services to the subgroup of schools selected for the study for a three-year period. LTPs consist of American Institutes for Research (AIR), Focused Schools, and NCS, Inc. (Pearson). Each LTP provided a Scope of Work for academic and support services in compliance with the contract. Lead Turnaround Partners conducted a comprehensive needs assessment, conducted initial interviews with school personnel, and identified services to be provided on-site to address the identified needs. LTP services that are provided to the school are monitored by the Virginia Department of Education through submission of quarterly reports.

Data Collection

Archival data were retrieved and analyzed from four priority elementary schools for this descriptive case study. Archival data refers to the information that already exists in someone else's files. Originally generated for reporting or research purposes, it is often kept because of legal requirements, for reference, or as an internal record. In general, because it is the result of completed activities, it is not subject to change and it is therefore sometimes known as fixed data

(Fawcett, 2008). Archival documents for this study consist of Lead Turnaround Partners' Scope of Work, Quarterly Reports, and Standards of Learning Achievement data. Documents will be requested from the Virginia Department of Education as well as locating documents using various internet search engines.

Data Analysis

This program evaluation involves the utilization of Stufflebeam's CIPP model and provides an in-depth look at the Context, Input, Process, and Product of the services provided by the Lead Turnaround Partner as documented by the assigned elementary school. Archival data is analyzed using a basic interpretative method using three stages of analysis; a) open coding to observe patterns; b) analysis to find broader themes from the patterns; and c) analysis of themes in the context of the research questions (Merriam, 1998). Archival data was collected and analyzed to identify themes or trends. The researcher used analytic generalizations as an appropriate logic for generalizing the findings from a case study (Yin, 2013).

Summary

Stufflebeam's program evaluation method is suitable for the purpose of this study in evaluating school programs (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). By utilizing archival data, the researcher assessed the Lead Turnaround Partners' effectiveness in providing services to assigned Priority schools from the perspective of monitoring services that were documented by the Virginia Department of Education and school-based stakeholders.

To strengthen the validity of the study and its findings, the researcher utilizes triangulation of data sources and methods (Yin, 2013). The results were analyzed to hypothesize analytic generalizations, which, when connected to findings in the existent literature, may be

applied to other turnaround services that are provided to schools that are identified as in need of reform.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Program evaluation is a critical component of educational assessment to ensure that effective practices are implemented to improve student achievement. Quality evaluation of schools involves assessment of all the aspects of the school and their impact on students, so it is the first step toward quality improvement and quality development (De Grauwe & Naidoo, 2004). The purpose of this study was to evaluate school-based services that Lead Turnaround Partners provided to priority elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia relative to the improvement, if any, of the third through fifth grade students' Standards of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores. The investigation was conducted as a program evaluation case study, utilizing Stufflebeam's Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) model (Stufflebeam, 2005). In this chapter, the researcher analyzes archival documents gathered during the evaluation of school-based services provided to improve reading scores on the SOL assessment.

The program evaluation was conducted using each of the four components of the CIPP model. By utilizing Stufflebeam's CIPP model, this program evaluation was designed to assess the overall effectiveness and viability of school-based services provided by Lead Turnaround Partners in low-performing Priority schools. The evaluation findings will guide future decision making, accountability, and increased understanding of the types of school-based services that are effective in improving student reading SOL assessment scores. To adequately gauge the impact of the services provided, archival qualitative and quantitative evidence was gathered. Archival documentation was gathered from Lead Turnaround Partners' Scope of Work, LTP Contracts, Need Assessments, and Quarterly Reports. Archival quantitative evidence was gathered from the Standards of Learning assessment reading scores from third through fifth grade from years 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 from the Virginia Quality School Profile website.

Context Evaluation

Context is the first component of the CIPP model for program evaluation. The context of the study assessed the needs, assets, and problems within the defined environment (Stufflebeam, 2005). To effectively evaluate the services provided by LTPs, it is essential to understand why there is a need for the program. The Lead Turnaround Partner program was implemented during the 2010–2011 school year and concluded during the 2017–2018 school year. The study narrowed the focus to four Priority elementary schools during the program years of 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. The program required state-approved LTPs to partner with the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools. The Virginia Department of Education denied these schools accreditation for failing to meet SOL assessment benchmarks. For a school to earn full accreditation, at least 75 percent of students must pass the reading and writing SOL test, and at least 70 percent must pass state assessments in mathematics, science, and history (VDOE, 2014). Accreditation ratings also may reflect credit earned by schools that successfully remediate students who failed the reading or mathematics test during the previous year (VDOE, 2014). Adjustments may also be made for students with limited-English proficiency and for students who have recently transferred into a Virginia public school (VDOE, 2014).

All four schools in the study were identified in 2013–2014 as persistently low-performing and scored in the lowest five percent of Title I schools. The schools were denied accreditation and designated as Priority in 2014–2015 school year. Schools identified as Priority are mandated by the state to engage a state-approved turnaround partner to help design and implement school-reform models that meet state and federal requirements (VDOE, 2014). Priority schools were subject to corrective actions prescribed by the state Board of Education and affirmed through a memorandum of understanding with the local school board (VDOE, 2014). The following was

the guiding question for the context evaluation: What factors led to the choice of the turnaround partners to be assigned to priority schools? To answer the research question, information from archival documents was analyzed from Standards of Learning Reading Assessment data and LTP Excluding Management Contracts. Published information indicates that each school in the study scored significantly below the 75 percent state benchmark required to obtain full accreditation. Therefore, each school in the study was mandated to select an LTP in one or more content areas. The scores qualified each school to be designated Priority and in need of improvement in reading for grades three through five. Table 1 depicts SOL reading assessment data collected from VDOE *School Quality Profiles* located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Table 1. *2013 SOL Reading Assessment Data*

SY	Division Name	School Name	Subject	Grade	Test Source	Pass
13–14	Lynchburg City	Dearington Elem/Innovation	Reading	3	SOL	35.14
13–14	Lynchburg City	Dearington Elem/Innovation	Reading	4	SOL	25.00
13–14	Lynchburg City	Dearington Elem/Innovation	Reading	5	SOL	42.86
		Overall SOL Score for Reading ONLY				**34.33**
13–14	Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary	Reading	3	SOL	39.22
13–14	Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary	Reading	4	SOL	37.04
13–14	Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary	Reading	5	SOL	36.36
		Overall SOL Score for Reading ONLY				**37.54**
13–14	Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy	Reading	3	SOL	32.39
13–14	Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy	Reading	4	SOL	29.31
13–14	Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy	Reading	5	SOL	68.97
		Overall SOL Score for Reading ONLY				**45.55**
13–14	Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary	Reading	3	SOL	28.81
13–14	Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary	Reading	4	SOL	46.67
13–14	Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary	Reading	5	SOL	41.48
		Overall SOL Score for Reading ONLY				**38.98**

The Virginia Department of Education established a state contract of approved LTP providers that local school boards may choose to contract for services. To provide additional information for the context evaluation question, the evaluator analyzed archival data from the state-approved list of LTP Excluding Management Contracts. The primary purpose of the LTP Excluding Management contracts is to provide local school divisions or other state or local public educational bodies a choice of Lead Turnaround Partners (LTP) to select from. According to the Virginia Department of Education:

> The LTP shall develop and implement an academic program for one or more of the core discipline areas of math, science, history/social science, and language arts using VDOE approved approaches to increase student achievement in persistently low-achieving public schools. (VDOE, 2012)

The published information documented that the four priority elementary schools in the study followed the steps outlined by the VDOE to select an LTP to provide school-based services. As seen in Table 2, the Lynchburg City Schools selected the same LTP to provide services to two identified priority schools. On the other hand, Norfolk City Schools selected two different providers, Innovative Educational Programs and Pearson. All three LTP providers were on the state-approved provider list.

Table 2. *Lead Turnaround Partners Selected by Priority Schools*

Division	**Priority Elementary School**	**School Selected State Approved LTP Providers**
Lynchburg	Dearington Elementary/Innovation School	American Institutes for Research (AIR)
Lynchburg	Perrymont Elementary School	American Institutes for Research (AIR)
Norfolk	Chesterfield Academy	Innovative Educational Programs, LLC
Norfolk	James Monroe Elementary School	Pearson LLC.

Research conducted by the Wallace Foundation (2011) noted that states can focus on developing scalable solutions to human capital and operator capacity issues, creating conditions for success through policy change, assessing the quality of turnaround providers and operators, and investing in internet technology and accountability infrastructure that underpins turnaround success. The Virginia Department of Education controlled the Request for Proposal process for LTPs, which ensured local school divisions that each state approved LTP provider met the standards of quality required by the state.

Input Evaluation

Input evaluation is the second component of the program evaluation using the CIPP model. In Stufflebeam's (2005) model, input analysis has been used to assess the competing strategies, work plans, and budget considerations for the selected approach (Stufflebeam, 2005). In this program evaluation, the researcher used input analysis to determine the findings for the second research question: How were school-based services identified?

The Lead Turnaround Partner in all four cases collaboratively developed a customized plan of action, which utilized feedback from teachers, administrators, and central office personnel interviews and surveys. The LTP conducted a comprehensive needs assessment or program audit that identified the degree to which each element was in place and assessed the quality of typical practices, then translated gaps and needs into recommendations for actions.

To answer the second question in the program evaluation archival needs assessments for each school, the researcher examined detailed information regarding the culture, climate, and academic program that currently exists at the school. The results of the needs assessments identified recommendations for school-based services that the LTP would provide to the schools. The LTP's Scope of Work was then reviewed and analyzed for specific school-based services to

be provided to each school. Services were then aligned with common themes identified in the needs assessment.

Lynchburg City Schools

American Institutes for Research (AIR) content specialists conducted a diagnostic needs assessment for Dearington Elementary/Innovation School and Perrymont Elementary School. The needs assessment is a compilation of instructional observations, staff interviews, and document and data reviews AIR conducted. Content specialists then identified recommendations for technical support, coaching, and professional development in the areas of English language arts and mathematics (AIR, 2015). AIR uses four key elements to ensure instructional quality that produce high levels of student achievement: 1) a coherent and aligned curriculum, 2) high levels of instructional effectiveness, 3) a set of aligned benchmark and summative assessments and 4) professional growth opportunities in the areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

Norfolk City Schools

Chesterfield Academy selected Innovative Educational Programs LLC (IEP) as the Lead Turnaround Partner. Members of the LTP team conducted a needs assessment to begin identifying goals and next steps that will drive the full implementation of the research-based CHILD model. The needs assessment process included a review of student achievement data, classroom observations, and teacher and principal interviews. The data collected would guide the planning for professional development opportunities and instructional decisions. IEP use several key elements when they conduct the needs assessment, which include: physical environment, learning environment, classroom management, instruction, active learning, assessment for learning and engagement, and educational climate.

James Monroe Elementary School selected Pearson LLC as its Lead Turnaround Partner. The Pearson team's needs assessment consisted of conducting classroom observations, administrator and teacher interviews, and student achievement SOL assessment data. Pearson uses several key indicators when they conduct needs assessments, which include: physical environment, learning environment, classroom management, instruction, active learning, student engagement, classroom management, and educational climate.

Table 3 illustrates the common themes from each school's needs assessment and LTP recommendations for targeted improvement. It is important to note that, for each theme, each LTP had similar recommendations to address the identified areas that need improvement. Specifically, needs assessment themes that identified student achievement, instructional resources, instruction, curriculum, and professional learning communities (PLCs) were prescribed the same school-based services. However, themes that focused on time, classroom environment, student data assessment, and professional development were recommended to be addressed by similar services but the focus on personnel was different. For example, for professional development in Lynchburg, the LTP recommended targeted services for 45 days of on-site content support for ELA/reading teachers. In Norfolk, Chesterfield Elementary provided content coaching but didn't specify how much time would be dedicated to providing the service. James Monroe's LTP cited that they would recommend 40 hours of on-site content coaching for reading teachers.

Table 3

ELA School-Based Services Identified by the LTPs after Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment Themes from LTP Providers	Dearington Elementary/ Innovation School	Perrymont Elementary School	Chesterfield Academy	James Monroe Elementary School
Student Achievement	Coaching to analyze student achievement data to achieve 75% passage on state SOL reading exam	Coaching to analyze student achievement data to achieve 75% passage on state SOL reading exam	Coaching to analyze student achievement data to achieve 75% passage on state SOL reading exam	Coaching to analyze student achievement data to achieve 75% passage on state SOL reading exam
Time	Redesign the school day. Provide content coaching 20 hours per week. Monitor effective use of extended time in guided reading	Redesign the school day. Provide content coaching 20 hours per week. Monitor effective use of extended time in guided reading	Provide content coaching. Monitor reading groups	Add time to the school day. Provide targeted coaching a minimum of 5 hours a week
Classroom Environment	Establish a school environment that improves safety, discipline, students' social, emotional, and health needs	Establish a school environment that improves safety, discipline, students' social, emotional, and health needs	Monitor classroom discipline practices	Provide classroom management professional development
Instructional Resources	Provide instructional resources that are research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards	Provide instructional resources that are research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards	Provide instructional resources that are research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards	Provide instructional resources that are research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards
Student Assessment Data	Implement Diagnostic Tools and sustaining data walls	Implement Diagnostic Tools and sustaining data walls	Provide training on data walls	Provide training on data driven instruction and walls
Curriculum	Coaching for Curriculum Alignment	Coaching for Curriculum Alignment	Provide curriculum alignment training	Provide curriculum alignment training
Professional Development	45 days of on-site content support for ELA/reading teachers Weekly PLCs Assist with planning PD calendar.	45 days of on-site content support for ELA/reading teachers Weekly PLCs Assist with planning PD calendar	Content Coaching for reading teachers Assist with planning PD calendar	40 hours of on-site coaching, Content Coaching for reading teachers Assist with planning PD calendar
Instruction	Modeling, classroom observations, align Virginia standards to lessons	Modeling, classroom observations, align Virginia standards to lessons	Modeling, classroom observations, align Virginia standards to lessons	Modeling, classroom observations, align Virginia standards to lessons
PLCs	Professional development sessions for principal, leadership team, and teachers	Professional development sessions for principal, leadership team, and teachers	Professional development sessions for principal, leadership team, and teachers	Professional development sessions for principal, leadership team, and teachers

Needs assessments conducted at each site led to recommendations to address the identified needs that were targeted for improvement. The recommendations were then customized into the Scope of Work for Academic and Support Services. The Scope of Work for Academic Support Services is the contractual agreement that formalized the recommendations for specific school-based services. Analyzing the Scope of Work archival documents for each school provided a more in-depth recommendations for the input evaluation component. The Scope of Work for Academic and Support Services were aligned with common themes identified in the needs assessment that was conducted at each school. The Scope of Work for Academic and Support Services is a template that the LTP must populate with information regarding services that they will provide to the school. School needs were identified during the initial interviews and discussions.

Table 4 illustrates the contractual school-based services that were provided to each Priority elementary school in the study. Commonalities in each contract include an on-site coordinator, instructional coaching, professional development, diagnostic tools, and progress monitoring. Commonalities of contractual school-based services that were provided by the LTP are directly aligned with the needs assessment findings and recommendations.

Tables 3 and 4 emphasize the need to work directly with teachers to improve student achievement. For example, the recommendation in the needs assessment at each site is to provide teachers with content coaching, instructional resources, professional development, guidance in professional learning communities, and support for curriculum alignment. Although each LTP recommended similar school-based services to be provided in the contractual agreement, the primary focus was the professional development of teachers. Teachers are the lead practitioners in the classroom.

Table 4

Contractual School-Based Services Identified by the LTP

Priority Elementary Schools	School Needs Identified During Initial LTP Initial Interview	Task/Service to Be Provided On-Site by the LTP to Address Identified Needs	Contracted On-Site Hours
Dearington/ Innovation Elementary School	Leadership, English Language Arts (ELA), and Mathematics	Instructional Coaching Model, Curricular and Instructional Tools and Processes, Diagnostic Tools, and Expert Coaching	AIR will provide a person on-site across the 40 hours of each week except as agreed upon by both parties. AIR will provide one on-site coordinator (33 days) who will provide and support guidance for the implementation of key LTP SIG related initiatives, acting as the primary responsibility center for the AIR portion of the SIG implementation at the school level. This person will work closely with the principal and school leadership team to carry out the overall SIG plan.
Perrymont Elementary School	Leadership, English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics	Instructional Coaching Model, Curricular and Instructional Tools and Processes, Diagnostic Tools and Expert Coaching	AIR will provide a person on-site across the 40 hours of each week except as agreed upon by both parties. AIR will provide one on-site coordinator (33 days) who will provide and support guidance for the implementation of key LTP SIG related initiatives, acting as the primary responsibility center for the AIR portion of the SIG implementation at the school level. This person will work closely with the principal and school leadership team to carry out the overall SIG plan.
Chesterfield Elementary School	Leadership, English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics	Coaching for school administrators and instructional leadership teams. Progress reports and Diagnostic Tools and Expert Coaching	The on-site LTP service option to be used is 40 hours.
James Monroe Elementary School	Leadership, English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics	Executive coaching for school administrators and instructional leadership teams with a clear approach for providing both pressure and support to get rapid and sustainable results.	The on-site LTP service option to be used is 40 hours.

According to Lane, Unger, and Morando-Rhim (2013), in turnaround situations it is especially important to have data-driven systems to guide intentional and deliberate practices to provide students with tiered instruction, improve teachers' instruction, and cultivate a community of practice with shared responsibility for the achievement of all students. Therefore, it can be assumed that the LTPs intentionally focused on targeting resources and time to the development of the teachers' instructional practices that include curriculum alignment, lesson planning, instructional delivery, student work, and student performance monitoring. There is no archival documentation in the needs assessment or scope of work that identifies the LTP working directly with students to improve student achievement. This is significant because it highlights the need for teachers to receive on-going weekly professional development specifically in academic content areas. School-based services were administered through whole group (PLC) coaching, individual coaching (classroom observations), modeling, and data assessment coaching. Each school-based service identified is directly connected to the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the context and input evaluation components are aligned with the expectations of the Virginia Department of Education and all of the Priority School sites in the study.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluation is the third component of the CIPP model. In Stufflebeam's (2005) model, process evaluation has been used to assess the implementation of the program being evaluated. In this program evaluation, the process analysis is pursued to determine findings for the third research question: To what degree were the school-based services provided as documented by the stakeholder schools? The process question was answered utilizing sampling of quarterly reports that were submitted to the Virginia Department of Education's Office of School Improvement by the LTP. The reports were a mandated component of the grant and were

required to be submitted monthly. To answer this question the researcher examined information documented by the monthly reports that focused on services provided to improve reading achievement in third through fifth grade. The third question continues to be answered by cross referencing archival Lead Turnaround Partners quarterly reports with the VDOE Office of School Improvement LTP Intervention Implementation Monitoring Tool. This monitoring tool gives a color-coded stoplight indicator per the following key: Green – Completed, Yellow – In-progress and Red – Off-track. The LTP Intervention Implementation Monitoring Tool provides feedback to the LTPs on the implementation status of each school-based service provided. The monitoring tool from the state-assigned Lead Partner ensures that the Lead Turnaround Partner, division, and school maintain the fidelity of implementation necessary for the reform. Data was retrieved by the researcher from the documents that specifically align to the school-based services the LTP provided to improve reading achievement in grades three through five.

Table 5 illustrates the frequency of school-based services provided by the LTP and references feedback provided to the LTP by the VDOE with the use of the monitoring quarterly reports.

Table 5

Process Evaluation: Frequency of LTP School-Based Services

LTP School-Based Service Themes	LTP Quarterly Reports Number of times school-based services were provided monthly during the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 SY	VDOE Quarterly Reports Stop Light Indicator of the effectiveness of school-based services provided during the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 SY
Student Achievement		
Dearington Elementary/Innovation School (AIR)	10	In-Progress
Perrymont Elementary School (AIR)	10	In-Progress
Chesterfield Academy (IEP)	6	In-Progress
James Monroe Elementary School (Pearson)	6	In-Progress
Instructional Resources		
Dearington Elementary/Innovation School (AIR)	9	Completed
Perrymont Elementary School (AIR)	9	Completed
Chesterfield Academy (IEP)	10	Completed
James Monroe Elementary School (Pearson)	10	Completed
Student Assessment Data		
Dearington Elementary/Innovation School (AIR)	8	Completed
Perrymont Elementary School (AIR)	8	Completed
Chesterfield Academy (IEP)	4	In-Progress
James Monroe Elementary School (Pearson)	4	In-Progress
Professional Development		
Dearington Elementary/Innovation School (AIR)	12	Completed
Perrymont Elementary School (AIR)	12	Completed
Chesterfield Academy (IEP)	8	Completed
James Monroe Elementary School (Pearson)	8	Completed
Instruction		
Dearington Elementary/Innovation School (AIR)	4	Completed
Perrymont Elementary School (AIR)	4	Completed
Chesterfield Academy (IEP)	4	Completed
James Monroe Elementary School (Pearson)	4	Completed
Professional Learning Communities		
Dearington Elementary/Innovation School (AIR)	12	Completed
Perrymont Elementary School (AIR)	12	Completed
Chesterfield Academy (IEP)	4	Completed
James Monroe Elementary School (Pearson)	4	Completed

The LTPs in the study provided similar services that were identified in the needs assessment and LTP contractual agreements. However, there were noticeable differences documented in student achievement, time dedicated to professional development, and professional learning communities. For example, American Institutes for Research (AIR) provided LTP services to Dearington and Perrymont. The contractual agreement was the same for both schools after the needs assessment and customizing the scope of work. The Dearington and Perrymont LTP provided significantly more direct school-based services to teachers in the areas of student achievement, student assessment data, professional development, and professional learning communities.

Chesterfield Academy and James Monroe LTPs service schools in Norfolk and provided the same school-based services in the areas of student achievement, student assessment data, professional development, and professional learning communities. However, the direct services were provided less frequently than American Institutes for Research (AIR) provided to Lynchburg schools. The most notable are services provided to teachers in professional development and professional learning communities. For example, AIR provided more than twelve hours of dedicated time to providing teachers direct coaching services in professional development and professional learning communities compared to eight hours a month LTPs provided Chesterfield Academy and James Monroe in professional development and four hours of school-based services in professional learning communities. The data does account for one identified area where LTPs in Norfolk schools provided more direct school-based services in the area of instructional resources. They documented spending one more additional hour each month in this targeted area compared to the schools in Lynchburg.

Archival documents from VDOE Quarterly Reports were also analyzed and incorporated into Table 6. Quarterly Reports documented if identified school-based services were completed, in progress or not administered at all according to the contractual agreement. The researcher analyzed archival Quarterly Reports submitted to the VDOE in the Fall and in the Spring of 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 school year when services were being provided. VDOE Quarterly Reports submitted by the VDOE's Lead Partner indicate that at all four schools student achievement was in yellow indicating in-progress. Each school is expected to achieve 75% proficiency in reading. The data indicate that although all schools made progress, they failed to achieve the 75% proficiency; therefore, the student achievement indicator is coded yellow indicating student achievement is in-progress. Research indicates that teaching quality is the most important school-based influence on student learning (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

It is apparent in analyzing the archival documents that all LTPs have similar approaches to providing school-based services for addressing the identified needs at each school. Each LTP provided details of services provided in the following areas: 1) Student Achievement, 2) Instructional Resources, 3) Professional Development, and 4) Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The most notable differences when comparing these areas were in the number of monthly services provided by the LTP. AIR provided ten (10) monthly services in the area of Student Achievement while IEP and Pearson provided six (6) monthly services. In the Instructional Resources area AIR provided nine (9) monthly services while IEP and Pearson provided ten (10). Student Assessment Data monthly services provided by AIR were eight (8) while IEP and Pearson provided four (4). In the area of Professional Development, AIR provided twelve (12) monthly services while IEP and Pearson provided eight (8). In the area of Instruction

all LTPs provided the same amount of monthly services which totaled to four (4) while the area of Professional Learning Communities' monthly services provided by AIR were twelve (12) and only four (4) provided by IEP and Pearson. The most notable differences were in the areas of Student Achievement, Professional Development, and Professional Learning Communities monthly services. AIR provided more monthly services as compared to IEP and Pearson in these areas. The CIPP model discussion describes the differences in monthly services and any differences in the SOL reading assessment outcomes for third through fifth grades in the schools' archival data.

Product Evaluation

Product evaluation is the fourth component of the CIPP model. In this component, final outcomes are evaluated to determine if the program is meeting its identified goals and objectives. The research question used for the product evaluation: How did achievement in reading change over the life of the grant? This question was answered using archival SOL data illustrated in Table 6, which includes baseline data from the 2013–2014 school year that first identified each school for Priority status that fell below the state mandated 75% passage on the SOL reading assessment administered at the end of each year. Archival SOL reading assessment data is also examined from school years 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 when an LTP was selected and provided school-based services to improve SOL reading achievement in grades three through five. Answers are inclusive of all students that tested in third, fourth and fifth grades during the years an LTP was selected to support school reform efforts.

Table 6

Baseline SOL Reading Assessment Data SY 2013–2014

School Year	School Name	Grade	Test Level	Test Source	Test	Pass Rate
2013–2014	Dearington Elementary/Innovation School	3	3	SOL	ELA: Reading	35.14%
2013–2014	Dearington Elementary/Innovation School	4	4	SOL	ELA: Reading	25.00%
2013–2014	Dearington Elementary/Innovation School	5	5	SOL	ELA: Reading	42.86%

School Year	School Name	Grade	Test Level	Test Source	Test	Pass Rate
2013–2014	Perrymont Elementary	3	3	SOL	ELA: Reading	39.22%
2013–2014	Perrymont Elementary	4	4	SOL	ELA: Reading	37.04%
2013–2014	Perrymont Elementary	5	5	SOL	ELA: Reading	36.36%

School Year	School Name	Grade	Test Level	Test Source	Test	Pass Rate
2013–2014	Chesterfield Academy	3	3	SOL	ELA: Reading	32.39%
2013–2014	Chesterfield Academy	4	4	SOL	ELA: Reading	29.31%
2013–2014	Chesterfield Academy	5	5	SOL	ELA: Reading	68.97%

School Year	School Name	Grade	Test Level	Test Source	Test	Pass Rate
2013–2014	James Monroe Elementary	3	3	SOL	ELA: Reading	25.81%
2013–2014	James Monroe Elementary	4	4	SOL	ELA: Reading	46.67%
2013–2014	James Monroe Elementary	5	5	SOL	ELA: Reading	48.98%

When analyzing the 2013–2014 baseline data for SOL reading performance in third through fifth grade from each school, Dearington/Innovation Elementary School's fourth grade students' SOL performance was the lowest of the three grade levels, testing at 25.00% proficiency on the SOL reading assessment. The lowest score for Perrymont Elementary on the SOL reading assessment was in the fifth grade with 36.36% showing proficiency. Chesterfield Elementary lowest percentage of proficiency was in the fourth grade at 29.31%, and James Monroe Elementary's lowest rate of proficiency was in the third grade at 25.81%. As seen in Table 7, across all four schools there was no identified grade level from third through fifth that met the 75% proficiency required by the state. Therefore, the data shows that comprehensive reform in English Language Arts/Reading was essential for each school in the study.

Table 7

2013–2014 Average Baseline SOL Reading Data for Third through Fifth Grades

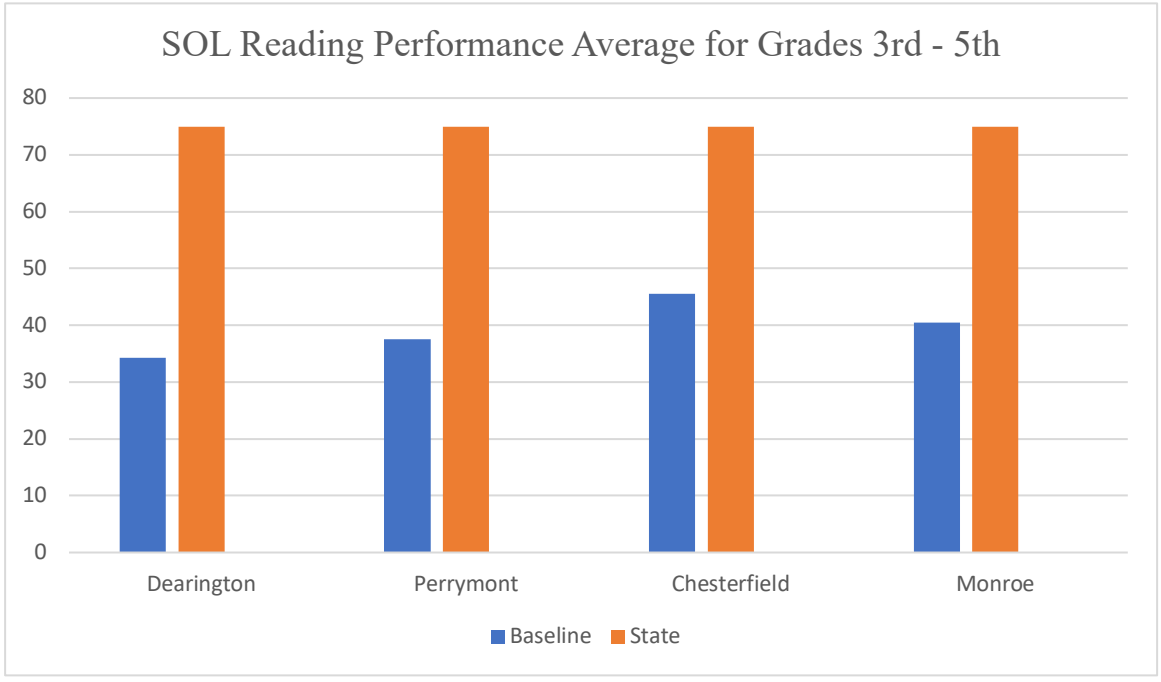

Table 8 illustrates the average performance of the SOL reading assessment scores in grades three through five as retrieved from archival SOL data for years 2014–2015 and 2015–2016.

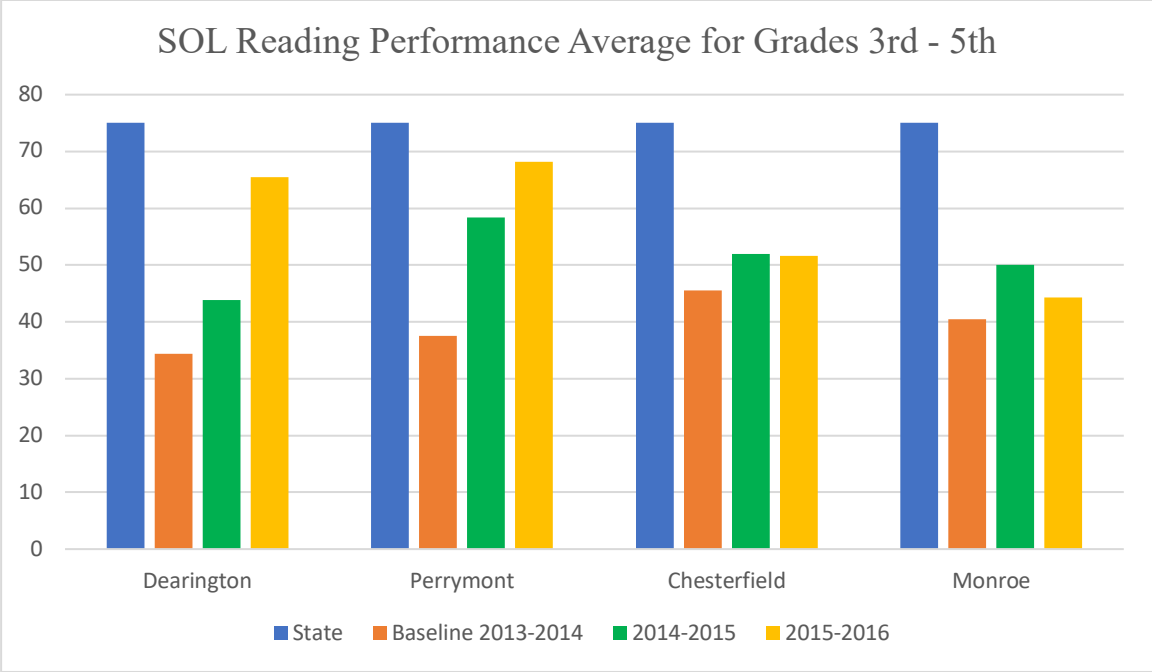

Table 8 visually depicts that, during the 2014–2015 school year, after one year of LTPs providing school-based services, each school recorded student achievement gains on the SOL reading assessment administered at the end of each year. Documented gains averaged 10 or more percentage points higher in reading compared to the 2013–2014 baseline data. None of the schools in the study achieved the state proficiency rate of 75%. Table 9 documents two years of SOL Reading assessment trend data for grades three through five at each school.

Table 9

SOL Reading Assessment Comparison Scores from 2013–2014 to 2015–2016.

Priority Elementary School	State Proficiency 75%	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016
Dearington/Innovation Elementary	75%	34.33%	43.82%	65.47%
Perrymont Elementary	75%	37.54%	58.34%	68.19%
Chesterfield Academy Elementary	75%	45.55%	51.9%	51.57%
James Monroe Elementary	75%	40.48%	50.01%	44.27%

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) was the Lead Turnaround Partner for Dearington/Innovation Elementary School and Perrymont Elementary School. Archival data indicates that both schools increased the passage rate on the SOL reading assessment. At Dearington/Innovation the SOL reading assessment scores increased from 34.33% in 2013–2014 to 43.82% in 2014–2015 and 65.47% in 2015–2016. At Perrymont Elementary, the SOL reading assessment scores increased from 37.54% in 2013–2014, to 58.34% in 2014–2015 and 68.19% in 2015–2016 school year.

Innovative Educational Programs LLC (IEP) was the Lead Turnaround Partner for Chesterfield Academy Elementary School. Archival data indicates that the school increased SOL reading assessment data in grades three through five from the initial baseline. At Chesterfield Academy Elementary School, reading assessment scores increased from 45.55% in 2013–2014 to 51.9% in 2014–2015 and took a slight decrease in performance to 51.57% in 2015–2016; however, it remained higher than the 2013–2014 baseline performance.

Pearson served as the Lead Turnaround Partner for James Monroe Elementary School. Archival data indicates that the school increased SOL reading assessment data in grades three through five from the initial baseline. At James Monroe Elementary School the SOL reading

assessment scores increased from 40.48% in 2013–2014 to 50.01% in 2014–2015 and decreased six percentage points in 2015–2016 to 44.27%.

Conclusion

After gathering archival data, the researcher addressed all four program evaluation questions that aligned with the CIPP model. There were four categories of Stufflebeam's model that were included in the evaluation: context, input, process, and product. Specifically, the CIPP program evaluation model assisted with determining what common school-based services emerged from the initial needs assessment that led to targeted contractual school-based services.

All four providers had nine overarching themes that were evident in the needs assessment. However, the nine overarching themes were developed into six common contractual school-based services. Although there were many similarities in the services provided, the frequency of the school-based services administered aligned with schools that made and sustained gains and schools that made gains but had slight declines in year two.

Chapter 5 will address the analysis of research question results based on the CIPP program evaluation outcomes. The chapter will provide a summary of the school-based services provided by the Lead Turnaround Partner in Priority elementary schools in Virginia and recommendations to add to the body of literature in school reform.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Persistently low-performing schools have been repeatedly targeted for comprehensive reform for more than two decades, usually with poor results. These efforts have suffered because they were often poorly implemented or insufficiently grounded in rigorous research (Lester, 2018). Effective research-based school reform strategies depend to some degree on program evaluations that provide conclusive evidence regarding strategies that improve student achievement. This study was the result of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver that identified intense school reform efforts for the lowest five percent of Title I school in Virginia. The flexibility waiver allowed state education agencies to utilize the School Improvement Grant (SIG) to contract with external Lead Turnaround Partners. Lead Turnaround Partners are selected by the Virginia Department of Education through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. LTPs are then selected to provide contractual services to local school boards to improve student achievement at low-performing schools by effectively implementing one of the four USED models: Turnaround, Restart, School Closure, and Transformation.

To evaluate school-based services provided by the LTP, Stufflebeam's (2005) CIPP model was used as a framework to evaluate three LTP programs at four sites. The evaluation process reflected the overall program from needs assessments to academic achievement outcomes in reading SOL scores for grades three through five. The program evaluation findings identified school-based services that emerged from the LTPs needs assessments, recommendations, and school-based services that improved student achievement on the SOL reading assessment in third through fifth grade at four Priority elementary schools. Archival documents were utilized to identify themes and direct school-based services in reading.

Summary of the Results

After reviewing archival data, the researcher addressed all four program evaluation questions that aligned with the CIPP model. There were four categories of Stufflebeam's model that were included in the evaluation: context, input, process, and product. Specifically, the CIPP program evaluation model assisted with determining what common school-based services emerged from contractual school-based services provided by the Lead Turnaround Partner.

The four priority elementary schools in the study that collaboratively worked with Lead Turnaround Partners for a period of two years had an increase in student achievement on the SOL reading assessment for students in third through fifth grade. There were common school-based services that emerged across all four schools that can be attributed to laying the foundation for the increase in SOL reading academic achievement scores.

Archival data was used in this study which resulted in the triangulation of data in support of the research questions. This increased the dependability of the findings that emerged from the study. The CIPP model was a suitable instrument to use for the evaluation of the school-based services, as it is based on the principle of valuing improvement and not promoting a program (Stufflebeam, 1971). The evaluation model allowed the researcher to pose questions to evaluate the progress and validity of the school-based services being implemented by Lead Turnaround Partners to improve student SOL reading achievement. In this study, the CIPP model assisted with answering the following research questions:

1. What factors led to the choice of the turnaround partners to be assigned to priority schools?
2. How were school-based services identified?

3. To what degree were the school-based services provided as documented by the stakeholder schools?
4. How did achievement in reading change over the life of the grant?

Context Evaluation Discussion

1. RQ 1: What factors led to the choice of the turnaround partners to be assigned to priority schools?

In January 2010, the USDOE released revised guidance for use of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, a federal grant program designed to improve student achievement in persistently low-achieving public schools. The revised federal guidance for the SIG program also encourages the use of external partners to support and supplement the limited capacity at the school and districts implementing the restart, turnaround, or transformation improvement models (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The Virginia Department of Education applied for the School Improvement Grant to support increasing student achievement in persistently low-performing schools in Virginia. To qualify for the school improvement grant Title I schools that failed to achieve full accreditation, by demonstrating that at least 75 percent of students passed the reading SOL test, and at least 70 percent passed the state assessments in mathematics, science, and history (VDOE, 2014).

When the lowest five percent of Title I schools were identified and designated Priority, the program required Priority schools to select a state-approved Lead Turnaround Partners to collaboratively work together to improve student achievement. According to the literature Trujillo and Renee (2012) believe that turning around failing schools requires a collaborative, community-driven effort that has a real focus on teaching and learning and is supported by sustained funding and wrap-around services that help students and their families. The role of the

LTP is to provide the necessary support to build capacity for instructional effectiveness, so that when it exits, the school will continue to embed effective practices and utilize the continuous improvement cycle for further growth (Corbett, 2011).

Published archival documents were the primary source of information. The documents reviewed indicate that each school in the study scored significantly below the 75 percent state benchmark required to obtain full accreditation. Therefore, each elementary school in the study was mandated to select an LTP in one or more content areas. For this study the researcher examined the SOL reading scores for grades three through five from each school in the study. The average SOL reading proficiency score was below 40% for each school. The state identified the selected schools in the study to be designated as Priority and in need of improvement.

All schools in the study selected an approved LTP with which to collaborate with the outlined goal to increase student achievement. Lead Turnaround Partners for each elementary school in the study conducted a needs assessment that was primarily completed through classroom observations and small group interviews with teachers and school administrators. Implementation guidelines and monitoring reports were mandated for each school and sent to the Virginia Department of Education monthly for review. The context evaluation was in complete alignment with the VDOE's expectation for selection of LTP providers.

Input Evaluation Discussion

RQ 2: How were school-based services identified?

Title I schools that are identified as Priority are required to develop a Plan of Improvement (POI), which must contain three mandated strategies: choose a federal model for turnaround, contract with a state-approved turnaround partner and work with a VDOE Contractor (VDOE, 2012). All four schools in the study met the required three mandated strategies. First, all

schools in the study selected the Transformation Model. Second, each school then contracted with a state-approved turnaround partner; Dearington/Innovation and Perrymont selected American Institutes for Research (AIR), Chesterfield Elementary selected Innovative Educational Programs (IEP) and James Monroe Elementary selected Pearson. The Virginia Department of Education assigned the Lead Partner, referred to as the VDOE Contractor.

After the LTP was selected, a needs assessment was conducted at each school. The results of the needs assessments identified recommendations for school-based services. The LTP then developed the Scope of Work from the recommendations. To provide an in-depth analysis, the LTP's Scope of Work was reviewed and analyzed for specific school-based services provided to each school. The services were aligned with nine common themes identified in the needs assessment. The themes identified were: Student Achievement, Time, Classroom Environment, Instructional Resources, Student Assessment Data, Curriculum, Professional Development, Instruction, and Professional Learning Communities. Targeted school-based services were customized to the needs of each school. After further analysis, it was determined that school-based services provided by the LTP at each school in the study focused on increasing student achievement by providing targeted professional development in the content area; for this study it was reading and teacher instructional coaching. The data showed that out of the nine themes, seven focused on providing teachers with targeted instructional support. The seven identified themes are: Student Achievement, Instructional Resources, Student Assessment Data, Curriculum, Professional Development, Instruction and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The literature review on teacher leadership indicates from a turnaround perspective, schools cannot afford to overlook teachers as a powerful transformative source of leadership for improvement (Lastinger Center, 2017). This validates the research conducted by Goldhaber &

Anthony, 2004; and Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005, when they stated that teaching quality is the most important school-based influence on student learning.

Therefore, the researcher concluded that the Input Evaluation of the CIPP identified that providing teachers with school-based services that support their development as practitioners, specifically through intentional coaching and modeling, may have influenced teaching and learning and is aligned with the schools' improved SOL reading scores.

Process Evaluation Discussion

RQ 3: To what degree were the school-based services provided as documented by the stakeholder schools?

The results from the process evaluation solidified the importance of the monitoring process and allowed for greater validly in the reporting of how often services were provided to each school. Monitoring was conducted by the LTPs, Internal Lead Partners and the school principal. The monitoring tools provided by the state ensured that the Lead Turnaround Partner, division, and school maintain fidelity when providing the identified service. Dewees (2016) validates that districts must provide a process for documenting actions and practices that are essential elements in the success or failure of turnaround. Holmes and Rangel (2012) identified the structures of internal accountability put into place by the school leader, which contribute to a relatively stable environment, as being a shared sense of norms, goals, expectations, and procedures. Research conducted by Kowal and Ableidinger (2011) agree that district leaders should start with known success factors, monitor turnaround schools frequently and intimately, and act on early indicators of success or failure. Monitoring documents required by the VDOE monthly by the LTP and quarterly by the LP, indicate that there were no barriers when providing services. Utilizing a process for program monitoring allowed the LTPs, LP and principals to

adjust the Plan of Improvement if required. While analyzing data from the LTP and LP monitoring reports the data revealed the frequency of services provided varied from school to school. This was to be expected because each school had a customized plan of improvement; however, when reviewing the student achievement outcomes for each school, the frequency of services provided appeared to make an impact on student performance. The most notable differences when comparing these areas were in the number of monthly services provided by the LTP. AIR provided ten (10) monthly services in Student Achievement while IEP and Pearson provided six (6) monthly services. In the Instructional Resources area AIR provided nine (9) monthly services while IEP and Pearson provided ten (10). Student Assessment Data monthly services provided by AIR were eight (8) while IEP and Pearson provided four (4). In Professional Development, AIR provided twelve (12) monthly services while IEP and Pearson provided eight (8). For Instruction all LTPs provided the same amount of monthly services which totaled four (4) while the area of Professional Learning Communities monthly services provided by AIR were twelve (12) and only four (4) provided by IEP and Pearson. The most notable differences were in the areas of Student Achievement, Professional Development, and Professional Learning Communities' monthly services. AIR provided more monthly services as compared to IEP and Pearson in these areas. The CIPP model discussion will analyze whether the differences in monthly services made a difference in the SOL reading assessment outcomes for third through fifth grades in the schools' archival data. Therefore, the monitoring of services being delivered was a critical component that was revealed during the evaluation of the overall program.

Product Evaluation Discussion

RQ 4: How did achievement in reading change over the life of the grant?

The product evaluation, or outcome, is measured by the increase in student performance on the SOL reading assessment in grades three through five. The state assessments are used to determine the level of student mastery of the grade-level standards. During the 2013–2014 school year, which was used as the baseline for data, each of the four priority schools was significantly under the benchmark of 75% passage in reading. Average pass rate for grades three through five in each school were: Dearington/Innovation Elementary 34.33, Perrymont Elementary 37.57%, Chesterfield Academy Elementary 45.55, and James Monroe Elementary 38.98%.

The 2014–2015 school year was the first year for each priority school to work with an LTP provider. The SOL reading assessment scores for all four schools reported gains on the state mandated reading assessment. Schools in Lynchburg with the same LTP provider reported the highest gains on the SOL reading assessment out of the four schools. Dearington/Innovation Elementary increased student achievement by 9.49%, and Perrymont Elementary increased student achievement by 20.80%. Norfolk City Schools also made increases to the overall student achievement for third through fifth grade SOL reading. Chesterfield Academy increased by 6.35% and James Monroe Elementary increased by 9.53%.

The 2015–2016 school year was the second year Priority schools collaborated with an LTP provider and received school-based services to improve student achievement on the SOL reading assessment. The Scope of Work was the same for the second year for all four schools. Average pass rate for grades three through five in each school for the second year were: Dearington/Innovation Elementary 65.47%, Perrymont Elementary 68.19%, Chesterfield

Academy Elementary 51.57 and James Monroe Elementary 44.27%. Schools in Lynchburg with the same LTP provider, continued to report gains on the SOL reading assessment. Dearington/Innovation Elementary reported gains of 21.65%, and Perrymont Elementary reported gains of 9.85%. Norfolk City Schools, however, decreased in performance on the SOL reading assessment by 0.33 at Chesterfield Academy Elementary. James Monroe Elementary also reported a decrease in student achievement on the state assessment by 5.74%.

Table 10

2014–2015 and 2015–2016 SOL Reading Scores for Third through Fifth Grade.

Priority Elementary School	2013-2014	+/-	2014-2015	+/-	2015-2016
Dearington/Innovation Elementary	34.33%	+9.49	43.82%	+21.65	65.47%
Perrymont Elementary	37.54%	+20.8	58.34%	+9.85	68.19%
Chesterfield Academy Elementary	45.55%	+6.35	51.9%	-0.33	51.57%
James Monroe Elementary	40.48%	+9.53	50.01%	-5.74	44.27%

Themes of the Evaluation and Recommendations

After analyzing the program evaluation results, there were themes that emerged from the analysis process: State Education Agency Leadership, Content Coaching Professional Development, School-Based Services Sustainability, and Monitoring and Accountability. All themes and recommendations are directly aligned with school-based services that the Lead Turnaround Partners provided to improve student achievement on the reading SOL assessment.

State Education Agency Leadership

The Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) turnaround process for low-performing schools provides a model that depicts strong state control in the school turnaround process. The

VDOE provided the vetting process for all the Lead Turnaround Partners that are selected to work with priority schools. This vetting process allowed schools to quickly select an external partner that was previously approved by the VDOE, thereby making the process of getting started with providing services a lot faster than if the division or school vetted them alone. Mass Insight (2007) research contends that a coherent, comprehensive state turnaround initiative would incorporate three key elements: Changing Conditions, Building Capacity, and Clustering for Support. State governments must take strong action even in strong local control states. They must act in concert with district and outside providers. Research conducted by the Wallace Foundation (2011) noted that states can focus on developing scalable solutions to human capital and operator capacity issues, creating conditions for success through policy change, assessing the quality of turnaround providers and operators, and investing in IT and accountability infrastructure that underpins turnaround success. It is evident that the Virginia Department of Education structured the process of working with LTPs around mandates that they developed and controlled. The requirement that each LTP conducts a needs assessment at each school site allowed for the emergence of common themes and recommendations that led to the development of school-based services that were directly aligned to improving the academic and professional deficiencies.

Content Coaching Professional Development

The evaluation process revealed that improving student achievement would require targeted content coaching and professional development. Teachers at each site received weekly content coaching in reading. Content coaching consisted of lesson plan alignment, reading strategies, modeling, co-teaching, and reading data analysis. According to LeFloch and Barbour (2014), partnerships with external experts can seem like a critical lifeline. The LTP provided a

lifeline to the schools in a form of dedicated personnel that provided weekly content coaching and professional development. This allowed teachers to develop what Tomlinson and Jarvius (2012) refer to as Teaching Up. Teaching Up requires that teachers create a base of rigorous learning opportunities, while understanding that students come to the classroom with varied points of entry into a curriculum and move through it at different rates. According to Lane, Unger, and Morando-Rhim (2013) in turnaround situations it is especially important to have a data-driven system to guide intentional and deliberate practices to provide students with tiered instruction, improve teachers' instruction, and cultivate a community of practice with shared responsibility for the achievement of all students. Allowing teachers to have the opportunity to develop the practice of Teaching Up or just providing opportunities to receive feedback on their work as practitioners can significantly impact the teaching and learning process. Therefore, student outcomes are more intentional.

After further analysis it is recommended that school leadership receive training in sustaining effective content coaching and professional development for teachers. A plan should be collaboratively developed between the school leadership and LTP for the first year the LTP transitions out. The needs assessment, scope of work, and plan delivery should be built into the turnaround process.

School-Based Services Sustainability

The School Improvement Grant was designed to provide grant funded services to Priority schools for a three-year period. When the SIG funding ended for Lead Turnaround Partners, the services provided to Priority schools ended. At the time of this study there is no archival data that documented how services would be sustained after the LTP ended the partnership. A plan for sustainable services would provide schools with opportunities to be trained in the themes that

emerged during the input program evaluation. The literature suggests that districts often overlook or do not fully recognize the critical role they play in providing schools with the support structures necessary to bring about the type of change that turnaround requires (Mass Insight, 2012). Research conducted by Baroody (2001) agrees that successful school turnaround requires district turnaround. The district must implement fundamental changes and provide support for schools. AIR (2010) validates that schools that do not have district support will have a much more difficult time turning a school around when working in isolation. Therefore, it is recommended that the VDOE and district leadership develop a three-year sustainable improvement plan that is continuously monitored by state provided Lead Partners, Division Superintendents, and School Administrators to ensure that school-based services that proved to be effective will continue at the school to support the professional development of teachers and continued efforts to improve student achievement.

Monitoring and Accountability

The success of the LTP at the Priority schools identified in the study can be attributed to specific mandates set by the Virginia Department of Education. The monitoring and accountability process from the state was identified throughout the evaluation process. In the beginning of the evaluation process the VDOE established a state contract of approved LTP providers that the local school boards may choose from to contract services. The state is also responsible for appointing an experienced external educational consultant to work closely with a division team to monitor division and school level improvement efforts (VDOE, 2012). Finally, the state then reviews SOL assessment data to determine if the schools are making the required progress to exit or maintain Priority status. This level of monitoring provided school-based services that were documented for consistency and relevance to the school improvement process.

Therefore, the recommendation is to extend the monitoring process for an additional two to three years after the services of the LTPs have been concluded. McKinney, Labat, and Labat, (2015) note that fundamentally important to the turnaround process are district practices such as using data to create school improvement plans emphasizing school-wide achievement goals based on student learning needs and using evidence-based instruction to improve student performance. Also, fundamentally important is having a monitoring plan that ensures that identified goals are being met with effective school-based services provided by internal or external stakeholders.

Conclusion

In the past two decades there have been numerous reform efforts that focused on scaling success too early rather than doubling down on quality and understanding what was working and why (Schoales, 2019). The focus of this study was to identify school-based services that emerged from Priority elementary schools working with the Lead Turnaround Partners to improve Standards of Learning (SOL) reading assessment scores in grades three through five. The results of the study revealed that all schools made considerable gains while working with LTPs. Though two schools in the study slightly regressed in the second year of the partnership, it never decreased to the levels of the baseline data. However, the program evaluation specifically pinpoints that providing professional development in content coaching is critical to increasing student achievement. All schools received more than 10 hours of weekly intensive coaching in reading. Two schools increased their passage rate by 20%. This school-based service should be documented and shared with central office and state education agencies. It is essential to have a leadership team that has an instructional expert focused on providing targeted services to teachers. Providing teachers with instructional professional development with corrective feedback has proven results of the study to directly impact student achievement. Therefore, the

program evaluation of the context, input, process, and product indicates that Lead Turnaround Partners' school-based services that developed teachers' instructional practices were aligned with an increase student achievement on grades three through five on the SOL reading assessment.

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